

Muhammad Rasulullah

The Apostle of Mercy

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Revised By

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Introduction

In the name of Allah, the Most Benevolent, the Most Merciful

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Word, and blessings and peace be on the one, exalted among the prophets and the Seal of the apostles, Muhammad, and his progeny and companions, and on those who sincerely follow him until the Day of Judgment.

The seminary in which the writer of these lines had his first lesson was the nursery which impressed upon his mind the mould of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The age at which he was enrolled in this blessed institution was much earlier than the normal school-going age of children; this was the seminary of his own home permeated with an air and steeped in a culture whose primal ingredient was the stamp of the Prophetic character. Every child of this household was expected to pattern his behavior in conformity with this family tradition wherein the small collection of juvenile literature, consisting both of prose and poetry, always in circulation among the children of the family, played not an insignificant role. Later on, the wise grooming of his elder brother, Dr. Hakim Syed ‘Abdul ‘Ali, was help him in going through two of the best books in Urdu on the life of the Prophet at comparatively young age.¹ Next only to Arabic, Urdu has, thanks to the labours of the writers in the recent past, a treasure of literature on the subject.

When the writer was able to learn Arabic and appreciate its literature, he drank with rapt attention from two of the earliest works on the Prophet’s life. One of these was *As-Sirat an-Nabawiyah* of Ibn Hisham and the other was *Zad al-Ma’ad*

¹ The story has been told by me in *At-Tariq-ilal-Medina*, in which I have told how deeply impressed I was by *Rahmat-ul-lil-‘Alamin*, a popular biography of the Prophet by Qazi M. Sulaiman Mansurpuri

written by Ibn Qayyim. He did not simply go through them, but having almost lost himself in the study of these books, found his heart and mind enthralled by certitude and an unshakable conviction. He felt captivated by a tender feeling of affection for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), whose life is filled with thrilling and soul-stirring events that, next to the Qur'an, it is the most potent means for shaping one's behaviour and creating a fervour of spirit. Besides these two books he also read avidly all those Urdu and English works on the subject which fell into his hands. The result of this intensive study has been that all of his writings so far have invariably reflected a touch of the Prophet's life-story. Whatever warmth and vigour and freshness there has ever been in his pen and whatever lucidity of style in the expression of his ideas he has ever emanated from the fascinating charm of that paradigm of perfection, that inexhaustible source of inspiration which fires one's imagination to the regions, heavenly and sublime. In truth, he has never penned anything that does not in some way or the other reflect the elegance of that prophetic mould or his own thoughtful reflection on its profound wisdom.

His articles delineating different aspects of the Prophet's noble character and his marvelous accomplishments have been published in the collection entitled *Karavan-i-Medina*.¹

A large number of books have been penned by the author of this book, but he has never had the opportunity to produce a treatise on the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), although he has ever felt the need of a biography written in a style intelligible to modern minds, utilizing both modern and ancient sources. Deviating not from the Qur'an and the hadith, such a biographical sketch has to be based on the

¹ The Arabic version known as *at-Tariq-Ilal-Medina* has been printed thrice from Medina, Lucknow and Damascus while its Urdu version has been published by the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow.

original source, yet it need not be merely an encyclopaedic collection amassing all the relevant as well as far-fetched reports on the subject without any critical examination. The biographies of this type have been in vogue aforetime, but they unnecessarily give rise to misgivings and doubts that are totally unfounded, nor the Muslims need trouble their minds about them. Several savants and scholars (unaffected by the skeptical disposition of the modernist and Orientalist) have already discussed these questions satisfactorily. A work of this nature should also be compatible with the spiritual truths and realities which are indispensable for comprehending the true nature of revelation, prophetic guidance, miracles and the recondite facts of reality. Furthermore, it should be written by one who can put his trust in the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) not as a national leader or statesman but as the Apostle of God sent for the guidance of the entire humanity. Only the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) so written can be placed before every unbiased educated person (whether a Muslim or a non-Muslim) without any reservation or specious reasoning. Accordingly, the writer has placed more reliance on the original sources in describing the events and character of the Prophet and narrated them in such a way that everything speaks for itself and allows the reader to arrive at his own conclusion. The life of the Prophet is a living portrait, conveying the feeling of the good and the sublime, for which the writer has no need to philosophise or draw any inference. In its charm, grace, harmony, excellence, effectiveness and appeal, the life of the Prophet does not, in truth and reality, need the polish or refinement of any writer or the exposition of an erudite scholar. All that one needs attempt is the narration of facts selected and arranged harmoniously in a simple and unaffected style.

Also, the recital of the Prophet's life-story requires a combination of intellect and emotion, both posed on an even

keel. A scholarly treatment of the subject accompanied by frigid analysis and cold logical reasoning is more likely to take away the warmth of its delicate charm, the glow of whose heavenly beauty is indispensable for a correct understanding of the facts and events closely related to the sentiments of credence and beliefs. If the life of the Prophet rehearsed by anybody tries to gloss over the tender susceptibilities, the attempt would undoubtedly be assiduous but wooden; it would be a tale striking and impressive but would fail to convey the essence and substance of prophethood; likewise, it is equally essential that the naiveté of credulity should not be allowed to becloud the soundness of intellectual judgment which is nowadays held as the test of validity. It should neither be against the accepted principles of logical reasoning nor an eulogy, infatuated with blind faith, acceptable only to the easy-believing Muslims and traditional scholars of faith living in a world of their own creation, unconnected and without any rapport with the outer, modern world of today. An unhesitating faith with the flame of ardent love is a divine blessing, no doubt; yet, one should never forget that this is the life of the Apostle of God (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who was sent as mercy for the whole universe and all the peoples of the world. His blessings can in no case be denied to any segment of humanity which has not had the opportunity of being brought up in an Islamic surrounding. Haply, it may turn out, by the mercy of the Lord, that such persons partake the blessing of Islam by catching a glimpse of the radiance emitted by the Prophet's life. The non-Muslims have as much claim to the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as those born in a Muslim home; or, rather they deserve it more for they stand in need of it.

The times and circumstances in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came cannot be overlooked in recounting his story. The conditions prevailing all over the world in the pre-Islamic time have, therefore, to be vividly

portrayed. It is necessary to describe the universal confusion, moral degradation and spiritual restlessness and disconsolateness to which man had fallen during the sixth century, as well as the social, economic and political causes that had combined to produce that gloomy atmosphere. The authors of that global degradation—tyrannical governments, distorted religions, fallacious and extremist schools of thought, ruinous movements and deceptive calls and summons—all had joined hands in bringing the then world to almost complete destruction. The present writer still remembers the difficulty he had to encounter in presenting a clear picture of the widespread depravation of the pre-Islamic age of pagan past in the opening section of his book *Madha Khaser al-'Alam, b'inhitat il Muslimin*.¹ He had to wade through almost the whole of Western historical literature pertaining to the period and to recreate the story by collecting bits and pieces scattered in numerous books.

This prelude to the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), now described somewhat at a greater length, would help the reader appreciate, in the light of the then putrid world, the grand accomplishment of prophetic guidance—its greatness, the vastness of its scope, the way it sharpened the wits, solved intractable problems and harmonised seemingly irreconcilable motive and elements. What was, after all, the greatness achievements of Muhammad's Prophethood? It was to give hope to the despaired heart of man, to take him back to the path of righteousness, to cleanse his mind and heart of the contaminating impurity and to raise him to the sublime heights of spirituality. What a gigantic task it was can be understood correctly only when the reader has before him a clear picture of the perplexing and arduous nature of the task faced by the Prophet and his companions. Often, one is unable to comprehend the turn of events and the decisions taken by the

¹ The English version has since been printed as *Islam and the World*, by the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow.

Prophet unless he is fully aware of the social, economic and political situation then obtaining in Medina, its physical condition and geographical situation, the surrounding tribes and the relationship existing between them, balance of power struck by past settlements and treaties of peace conditions immediately preceding the hijrah¹ and the tribal customs and conventions and their national code of ethics and laws. Anybody trying to study the life of the Prophet unmindful of these basic facts would be traveling in a dark tunnel wherein he can neither see to his right or left nor know where he is destined to emerge at the end of his journey.

All that has been stated about the environs of Medina is true for the then civilized regions around Arabia also. One can neither reckon the significance of the call of Islam nor the nature of its venturesome adventure so long as one is not acquainted with the despotic rule as well as the splendour and vastness of the surrounding kingdoms, their culture and civilization, their military strength and the pretension and pageantry of their rulers who were invited by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), through his epistles, to accept Islam. Recent research has unearthed new materials about events, lives and cultures of the countries around Arabia, which were earlier either not known at all or of which the historians had only a hazy picture. A biographer of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) should now take full advantage of all these new discoveries in the fields of archeology and history and present the facts in conformity with the latest methods of comparative studies.

The writer of these lines is fully conscious of the difficulties alluded to here as well as the great fund of literature hitherto

¹ Lit. "emigration", a word often transcribed as 'hegira', is applied to the emigration of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from Mecca to Medina. It marks the starting point of the Muslim era.

accumulated in different languages through the industry of the Prophet's biographers. Still, he considers it an honour to enter this long and luminous list of the Prophet's biographers by attempting a new life-story of the most lovable and admirable personality of all times and ages.

The meager amount of leisure time and the poor eyesight of the writer have, however, been the two impediments that have always prevented him from undertaking this inspiring task. He was well aware of the difficult and delicate nature of biographical writings and also of the fact that to pen the life of the greatest of all prophets was certainly most onerous. He had, of a fact, written a large number of such life-sketches, perhaps more than most of his contemporary writers—for he had the good fortune of penning the achievements of great reformers and revivalists of the faith ever since he learned to take the pen in his hand. Narration of those stories, which run into a few thousand pages, were no less exhilarating to him than enjoying the company of those purer souls, but he still felt diffident in driving his pen to write the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He was conscious of the fact that very often a writer is so swayed by his own predisposition that he begins to paint the picture of his paragon of virtue in the colour of his resemblance. The portrait thus painted is more of the writer himself, for, instead of delineating the story of his ideal, in an objective and impartial manner, he unconsciously begins to view him in the light of his own experience and inclinations.

Those who are conversant with the science of mind and have also gained an insight into ethical conduct of the people through a person experience and study of the behaviour and deportment of their mates and colleagues over a length of time, can easily realize the inadequacy of diction and modes of expression in the faithful portrayal of a human character, its inner reaches as well

as its spirit soaring high above the skies—it is a task so delicate and impassable that often it comes in upon the writer himself. Only he can hope to succeed in this precarious job who has the capacity to touch the chords of another man's sentiments, enter into his spirit of emotions and sentiments, share the tenderness as well as fervour of his passion and echo his joys and sufferings. Such a man has to have a soft corner in his heart which can perceive how others spend their lonely nights after bustling days, how they behave within their homes and with the friends outside, how they acquit themselves in war and peace, how they carry themselves in excitement and calmness, in want and in plenty and in strength and in weakness. Verily, they are numerous heartstrings, sentiments and susceptibilities of man, still mysterious and undisclosed, for which one would not find an appropriate word in the greatest lexicon of any language.

Now, in its charm and elegance, in its catholicity and comprehensiveness and in its depiction of the most delicate and deepest feelings of human life, the biography of a prophet presents a task far more formidable than any other kind of word painting. Of a truth, it was only the Hadith¹ of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the like of which is to be found nowhere in the memoirs of other prophets or the greatest men whose life-story has been preserved by history, which has made it possible to penetrate into the inner most reaches of human psyche. In the compilations containing the Prophet's acts and sayings as well as in his earliest biographies, one finds such entrancing exaltations of God and moving supplications, such impassioned entreaties and absorbing orisons, expressing such heart-felt concern for the weal of entire humanity, that one's heart begins to breathe and burn with their

¹ Lit. "a saying," it stands for the "prophetic tradition, a short account of some act or word of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and passed on by a chain of trustworthy narrators."

penetrating fervidness.² Similarly, the utterance and speeches of the Prophet handed down by his companions and friends excel the most dainty and eloquent pieces of literature.³ With all this material at hand, one should have no difficulty nor need to be ingenious, as one is wont to do in writing the lives of other great personalities. His life is the most perfect and winsome, based on unimpeachable evidence of the Divine Writ and unquestionable records of history, furnishing a vivid and detailed account of his looks and lineament, character and deportment, moral behaviour and method of prayer, his living awareness of God and anxiety for his fellow beings, the grace and elegance of his discourses, and the miraculous march of events in his momentous life. These accounts, recorded with the greatest care and restraint, present, notwithstanding the great labour undertaken by early biographers, only a glimpse of that radiant soul. God may recompense them all with a goodly return, for they have left for us an undiminishing treasure in the form of the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) which can be partaken by every individual, group and race to the end of time.

“Verily in the messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for him who looks unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much” (Qur’an 33:21).

For these reasons, perhaps, he never ventured to attempt writing a new life of the Prophet; actually, he always considered it to be beyond his capacity. But, some of his respected friends¹ repeatedly pressed him to write a life of the Prophet in Arabic

² One should see the author’s article “Life of Muhammad as reflected by his Prayers,” since printed in the form of a booklet, which explains what a deep insight the innermost feelings of human mind and heart as reflected by the Prophet’s prayers and how impressive they are in shaping one’s conduct and morals.

³ The chapter of “Finality of the Prophethood” in the author’s another work *Islamic Concept of Prophethood* needs be seen.

¹ One who was most insistent, was Sheikh Muhammad Sawwaf, founding member of the Rabitat ‘Alami-I-Islami, Mecca and Adviser, Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia

which should keep in view the intellectual needs and understanding of the modern generation as well as the prevalent methods of scientific study of history and interpretation and the critical attitude discernible now-a-days. Every generation writes history afresh in a language intelligible to it, for it is necessary to do so, like the continuous diagnose of disease and researches in medical treatment which undergo a change with the times. Yet, essential though it may be to keep these dispositions in mind, it should never be necessary to put up one's own interpretation to the past events in order to give them the colour of one's own ideologies, predilections and prejudices, which differ from man to man and change with the dawn of every day; nor the life of the prophet need be tainted with any ill-will or ignorance, nor yet should it be made a means to reflect the invariables of any particular social or political movement or ideology.

At last, God set the heart of the writer to the task and he devoted himself to it with rapt attention. He went through the Hadith literature and the biographical accounts of the prophet, old and new, in order to derive maximum benefit from all the material he could lay his hands on. Then, placing reliance on the most authentic works on the subject, he started writing the present account. The works to which he is indebted most in this task are the book of *Sihah*,¹ *Sirat Ibn Hisham*, *Zad al-Ma'ad of Ibn Qayyim* and *Sirat Ibn Kathir* (which originally formed part of his larger work entitled *Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah*, but later on took the form of the life of the Prophet in four volumes²). He also tried to make the best use of modern works and the sources available in European languages, some which elucidate certain events of the Prophet's life or shed new light on the society and kingdoms of the countries around Arabia during the early

¹ The *Sihah* or *Sihah Sittah* comprises the six most trustworthy collections of Traditions compiled by Bukahri, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah.

² Published by 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, Ltd. (1384/1964), Mustafa 'Abdul Wahid, ed.

Islamic period. It has been his endeavour to present a integrated account of the intellectual, educative and missionary aspect of the Prophet's life, rather than allow anyone of these to overshadow the others. His effort has also been to make the presentation as vivid, easy and familiar as possible, which, by itself, may win over the reader to follow the example of the great Prophet whose life and mission are without parallel—unique as a biography of the greatest man of any nation and unmatched by the summons of any religion or movement. With full confidence in the magnetism of the Prophet's life the writer considers it prudent to place a true, untinged and undiluted account of the Prophet's life before his readers. The language of truth is always unadorned and simple.

From October 1975 (Shawwal 1395) to October 1976 (Shawwal 1396) the writer of these lines remained completely engrossed in the task save for small spells wasted in illness or travels abroad, and was able to hand over the manuscript of the Arabic version to the press by the end of Shawwal 1396.

The writer has great pleasure in acknowledging his debt of gratitude to two of his friend who have been of great assistance to him in the writing of this book. One of them, Maulana Burahanuddin Sambhali, a lecturer in Hadith in the Nadwatul 'Ulama, rendered him valuable help by finding the relevant *ahadith*¹ and verification of certain matters mentioned by the early biographers. Mohiuddin Ahmad is another colleague who has helped the writer in going through the Western sources, encyclopedias and historical literature. Mohiduddin Ahmad has also rendered this work into English. May Allah recompense them both for their sincere and arduous assistance to the author.

For quite some time the author has been used to dictating his writing, owing to his weak eyesight. Hence, he had to helped by

¹ Plural of Hadith

some students of the Darul ‘Uloom. Of these, two students, Muhammad Mu’adh of Indore and ‘Ali Ahmad Gujrati, as well as Nur Alam Amini Nadwi, a young teacher of the Nadwi ‘Ulama, have been specially helpful to him. As for the maps included in this book, care was taken to get them prepared as accurately as possible for they are essential for understanding the politico-geographical situations described in this work. While Muhammad Hasan Ansari, M.A. (Geo) and Professor Muhammad Shafi, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the Department of Geography, Muslim University, Aligarh, as well as the colleagues of the latter have taken personal interest in the preparation of these maps, valuable suggestions were given by Muhammad Rabe’y Nadwi who is Head of the Department of Arabic Literature in the Darul ‘Uloom, Nadwatul ‘Ulama and is also the author of a textbook on the geography of Arabia. Many thanks are also due to Mahmood Akhtar of the Allahabad University for recasting these maps afresh for the Urdu and English versions. Lastly, mention may be made of his nephew, Syed Muhammad Al-Hasani, who has rendered this book into Urdu with the same enthusiasm as he had translated some of the earlier Arabic works of the present writer. May Allah bless all of them for their labours.

In the end the author seeks the mercy of God for his own self and beseeches the Lord to make this work beneficial to all those who go through it. If this work succeeds in stirring the embers of Prophet’s love in the heart of any Muslim or creates a longing in any non-Muslim to know more about the blessed Prophet and his teachings, the writer would deem his labour to have been amply rewarded. Yet, its true reward, as one might wish and earnestly ask for, would be its acceptance by the Lord as a means for one’s salvation in the hereafter.

Abul Hasan ‘Ali

Rae Bareli

Friday, 15th December, 1978

THE AGE OF IGNORANCE

Religious Conditions

Great religions of the world had spread the light of faith, morality and learning in the ages past, but each of these had rendered a disgrace to its name by the sixth century of the Christian era. Crafty innovators, unscrupulous dissemblers and impious priests and preachers had, with the passage of time, so completely distorted the scriptures¹ by adulterating the teachings and commandments of their respective religions that it was almost impossible to recall their original shape and content. Had the founder or prophet of any one of them returned to earth, he would unquestionably have refused his supposed religion and denounced its followers as apostates and idolaters.

Judaism had, by then, been reduced to an amalgam of dead rituals and sacraments without any spark of life left in it. Also, being a religion upholding racial divide, it has never had any message for other nations or the good of the humanity at large.

It had not even remained firmly wedded to its belief in the unity of God (which had once been its distinguishing feature and had raised its adherents to a level higher than that of the followers of ancient polytheistic cults), as commended by the Prophet Abraham to his sons and grandson Jacob. The Jews had, under the influence of their powerful neighbors and conquerors, adopted numerous idolatrous beliefs and practices as acknowledged by modern Jewish authorities:

The thunderings of the Prophets against idolatry show, however, that the cults of the deities were deeply rooted in

¹ The manner in which the scriptures of all the great religions had been deformed and mutilated, and, in most cases, given an entirely false colouring, has been treated in some detail, quoting the authorities belonging to each of them, under the title "Qur'an and the Earlier Scriptures" (pp.171-183) in my earlier work entitled *Islamic Concept of Prophethood*.

the heart of the Israelites people, and they do not appear to have been thoroughly suppressed until after the return from the Babylonian exile... Through mysticism and magic many polytheistic ideas and customs again found their way among the people, and the Talmud confirms the fact that idolatrous worship is seductive.¹

The Babylonian Gemara² (popular during the sixth century and often even preferred to the Torah by the orthodox Jews) typically illustrates the crudeness of the sixth century Jews' intellectual and religious understanding. This is by virtue of its jocular and imprudent remarks about God and many an absurd and outrageous belief and ideas, which lack not only sensibility but also inconsistency with the Jewish faith in monotheism.³

Christianity had fallen prey, in its very infancy, to the misguided fervour of its overzealous evangelists, unwarranted interpretation of its tenets by ignorant church fathers and iconolatry of its gentile converts to Christianity. The doctrine of Trinity, which came to have the first claim to the Christian dogma by the close of the fourth century, has been thus described in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*:

It is difficult, in the second half of the 20th century to offer a clear, objective, and straightforward account of the revelation, doctrinal evolution, and theological elaboration of the mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian discussion, as envisioned by Roman Catholics as well as other sectors, presents a somewhat unsteady silhouette. Two things have happened. There is an arrangement on the part of the

¹ Ludwig Blan, Ph. D. of Jewish Theological Seminary, Budapest, Hungary, in the article on "Worship" in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. XII, pp. 568-6.

² Talmud is the body of Jewish law and legend comprising the Mishnah (precepts of the elders codified c. 200 A.D.). The Gemara is a commentary on the Mishnah (in recensions, at Jerusalem c. 400 and at Babylon c. 500).

³ For details see Dr. Rohling's *Jews in the Light of Talmud*. Arabic version *al-Kans al-Marsud fi Qawa'id fi al-Talmud* by Dr. Yusuf Hina.

exegetes and Biblical theologians, including a constantly growing number of Roman Catholics that one should not speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualification. There is also the closely parallel agreement on the part of the historians of the trinitarian dogma and systematic theologians that when one does speak of an unqualified Trinitarianism, one has moved from the period of Christian origins to, say, the last quadrant of the 4th century. It was only then that what might be called the definitive Trinitarian dogma 'one God in three persons' became thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought.¹

Tracing the origin of pagan customs, rites, festivals and religious services of the pagans in Christianity, another historian of the Christian church gives a graphic account of the persistent endeavour of early Christians to ape the idolatrous nations. Rev. James Houston Baxter, Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of St. Andrews, writes in *The History of Christianity in the Light of Modern Knowledge*:

If paganism had been destroyed, it was less through annihilation than through absorption. Almost all that was pagan was carried over to survive under a Christian name. Deprived of dummy-gods and heroes, men easily and half-consciously invested a local martyr with their attributes and labeled the local statue with his name, transferring to him the cult and mythology associated with the pagan deity. Before the century was over, the martyr cult was universal, and a beginning had been made of that imposition of a deified human being between God and man which, on the one hand, had been the consequence of Arianism, and was, on the other, the origin of so much that is typical of medieval piety and practice. Pagan festivals

¹ *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967) art. "The Holy Trinity", Vol. 14, p.295

were adopted and renamed: by 400, Christmas Day, the ancient festival of the sun, was transformed into the birthday of Jesus.²

By the time the sixth century reared its head, the antagonism between Christians of Syria, Iraq and Egypt on the question of human and divine natures of Christ had set them at one another's throats. The conflict had virtually turned every Christian seminary, church and home into a hostile camp, each condemning and berating the other and thirsting after its adversary's blood. Men debated with fury upon shadows or shades of belief and staked their lives on the most immaterial issues,¹ as if these differences meant a confrontation between two antagonistic religions or nations. The Christians were, thus, neither inclined nor had time to set their own house in order and smother the ever-increasing viciousness in the world for the salvation of humanity.

In Iran, from the earliest times, the Magi worshipped four elements² (of which fire was the chief object of devotion) in the oratories or fire temples for which they had evolved a whole mass of intricate rituals and commandments. In actual practice, the popular religion included nothing save the worship of fire and adoration of Huare-kishaeta or the Shining Sun. Certain rituals performed in a place of worship were all that their religion demanded, after which they are free to live as they desired. There was nothing to distinguish a Magi from a non-conscientious, perfidious fellow.

Arthur Christensen writes in *L'Iran Sous les Sassanides*:

It was incumbent on the civil servants to offer prayers four

² *The History of Christianity in the Light of Modern Knowledge*, Glasgow, 1929, p. 407.

¹ Alfred J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Last Thirty Years of Roman Dominion*, Oxford (1902) pp. 44-45.

² These elements were light, water, earth and wind.

times a day to the sun besides fire and water. Separate hymns were prescribed for rising and going to sleep, taking a bath, putting on the sacred cord, eating and drinking, sniffing, hair dressing, cutting of the nails, excrement and lighting the candle which were to be recited on each occasion with the greatest care. It was the duty of the priests to compound, purify and tend the sacred fire, which was never to be extinguished, nor was water ever allowed to touch the fire. No metal was allowed to rust, for metals, too, were revered by their religion.¹

All prayers were performed facing the sacred fire. The last Iranian Emperor, Yazdagird III, once took an oath, saying: "I swear by the sun, which is the greatest of all gods." He had ordered those who had abjured Christianity to reenter their original faith to publicly worship the sun in order to prove their sincerity.² The principle of dualism, the two rival spirits of good and evil, had been upheld by the Iranians for such a long time that it had become a mark and symbol of their national creed. They believed that Ormuzd creates everything good, and Ahriman creates all that is bad. These two are perpetually at war and the one or the other gains the upper hand alternately.³ The Zoroastrian legends described by the historians of religion bear remarkable resemblance to the hierarchy of gods and goddesses and the fabulousness of Hindu and Greek mythology.⁴

Buddhism, extending from India to Central Asia, had been converted into an idolatrous faith. Wherever the Buddhists went they took the idols (of the Buddha with them) and installed them

¹ A. Christensen, *L'Iran Sous Les Sassanides*, Paris, 1936, (Urdu Translation by Prof. Muhammad Iqbal, *Iran ba- 'Ahd-I-Sasaniyan*)

² Ibid., pp.186-7.

³ Ibid., pp.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 183-233

there.⁵ Although the entire religious and cultural life of the Buddhists is overshadowed by idolatry, the students of religion have grave doubts whether Buddha was a nihilist or a believer in the existence of God. They are surprised how this religion could at all sustain itself in the absence of any faith or conviction in the primal being.

In the sixth century A.D., Hinduism had shot ahead of every other religion in the number of gods and goddesses. During this period, 33 million gods were worshipped by the Hindus. The tendency to regard everything which could do harm or good as an object of personal devotion was at its height and this had given a great encouragement to stone sculpture with novel motifs of decorative ornamentation.¹

Describing the religious condition of India during the reign of Harsha (606- 648), a little before the time when Islam made its debut in Arabia, a Hindu historian, C. V. Vaidya, writes in his *History of Mediaeval Hindu India*,

Both Hinduism and Buddhism were equally idolatrous at this time. If anything, Buddhism perhaps beat the former in its intense idolatry. That religion started, indeed, with the denial of God, but concluded by making Buddha himself as the Supreme God. Later developments of Buddhism conceptualized other gods like the Bodhisatvas and the idolatry of Buddhism, especially in the Mahayana school, was firmly established. It flourished in and out of India so much that the word for an idol in the Arabic² has come to be known as Buddha itself.³

⁵ Ishwar Topa, *Hindustani Tammaddun*, Hydrebad (N.D.) p. 209 and Jawahar Lal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, pp. 201-2.

¹ See R.C. Dutt, *Ancient India*, Vol. III, p. 276.

² But, however, stands for idol in Persian and Urdu but not in Arabic.

³ ² C.V. Vaidya, *History of Medieval Hindu India*, Vol. I, Poona (1924), p. 101.

C. V. Vaidya further says,

No doubt idolatry was at this time rampant all over the world. From the Atlantic to the Pacific the world was immersed in idolatry; Christianity, Semitism, Hinduism and Buddhism vying, so to speak, one with another in their adoration of idols.¹

Another historian of Hinduism expresses the same opinion about the great passion for multiplicity of deities among the Hindus in the sixth century. He writes,

The process of deification did not stop here. Lesser gods and goddesses were added in the ever-increasing numbers till there was a crowd of deities, many of them adopted from the more primitive peoples who were admitted to Hinduism with the gods whom they worshipped. The total number of deities is said to be 33 crores, i.e. 330 million, which, is the concretization of the phrase “the name is legion”, merely implies an innumerable host. In many parts of the country the minor gods receive as much or even more veneration than the major gods.¹

The Arabs had been the followers of Abrahamic religion in the olden times and had the distinction of having the first House of God in their land. But the distance of time from the great patriarchs and prophets of yore and their isolation in the arid deserts of the peninsula had given rise to an abominable idolatry. Such adoration closely approximated to the Hindu’s zeal for idol-worship in the sixth century A. D. In associating partners to God they were not behind any other polytheistic people. Having faith in the companionship of lesser gods with the Supreme Being in the direction and governance of the

¹ *History of Ancient India*, Vol. I, p. 101.

¹ L.S.S. O’Malley, *Popular Hinduism – The Religion of the Masses*, Cambridge (1935) pp. 6-7.

universe, they held the belief that their deities possessed the power to do them good or harm, or give them life or death. Idolatry in Arabia had reached its lowest ebb, where every region and every clan or rather every house had a separate deity of its own.²

Three hundred and sixty idols had been installed within the Ka'ba and its courtyard³—the house built by Abraham for the worship of the One and only God. The Arabs actually paid divine honors not merely to sculptured idols but venerated all types of stones and fetishes: angels, jinn and stars were all their deities. They believed that the angels were daughters of God and the jinn His partners in divinity⁴ and thus both enjoyed supernatural powers whose mollification was essential for their well-being.

SOCIAL AND MORAL CONDITIONS

This was the plight of the great religions sent by God, from time to time, for the guidance of humanity. In the civilised countries, there were powerful governments and great centers of arts and culture and learning but their religions had been garbled so completely that nothing of their original spirit and content was left in them. Nor were there any reformers or divinely inspired guides of humanity to be found anywhere.

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Crushed under vexatious and burdensome taxes levied by the Byzantine Empire,¹ the allegiance to any alien ruler was

² *Kitabul-As-nam* by Ibn al-Kalabi, p. 33.

³ *Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Maghazi, Chap. Conquest of Mecca.*

⁴ *Kitab-ul-Asnam*, p.44.

¹ The eastern Roman or Byzantine empire, which was known to the Arabs as Rum, held, with its capital at Constantinople, Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, all the islands in the

considered by the populace as less oppressive than the rule of Byzantium. Insurrections and revolts had become such a common feature that in 532 A.D., the public voiced its discontent most dramatically in Constantinople by the Nika (win or conquer) revolt which took a toll of 30,000 lives.² The only diversion of the chiefs and nobles was to squeeze wealth, on different pretexts, from the harassed peasantry, and squander it on their pleasure and amusement. Their craze for merriment and revelry very often reached the depths of hideous savagery.

The authors of *Civilization, Past and Present* have painted a lurid picture of the contradictory passions of the Byzantine society for religious experience as well as its love for sports and recreation marked by moral corruption:

Byzantine social life was marked by tremendous contrasts. The religious attitude was deeply ingrained in the popular mind. Asceticism and monasticism were widespread throughout the empire, and to an extraordinary degree even the most commonplace individual seemed to take a vital interest in the deepest theological discussions, while all the people were much affected by a religious mysticism in their daily life. But, in contrast, the same people were exceptionally fond of all types of amusements. The great Hippodrome, accommodating 80,000 wide eyed spectators, was the scene of hotly disputed chariot races which split the entire populace into rival factions of 'Blue' and 'Green.' The Byzantine people possessed both a love of beauty and a streak of cruelty and viciousness. Their sports were often bloody and sadistic, their tortures horrible, and their aristocratic lives were a mixture of

Mediterranean Sea, Egypt and all the coastlands in North Africa during the period. It came into existence in 395 A.D. and ended with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453.

² *Historians History of the World*, Vol. VII, p. 73.

luxury, intrigue, and studied vices.¹

Egypt had vast resources of corn and shipping on which Constantinople largely depended for its prosperity, but the whole machinery of the imperial government in that province was directed to the sole purpose of squeezing profits from the ruled for the benefit of the rulers. In religious matters, too, the policy of suppressing the Jacobite heresy was pursued relentlessly.² In short, Egypt was like a milking cow whose masters were only interested in sucking her milk without providing any fodder to her.

Syria, another fair dominion of the Byzantine Empire, was always treated as a hunting ground for the imperiousness and expansionist policy of the imperial government. Syrians were treated as slaves, at the mercy of their master, for they could never pretend to have any claim to kind or considerate behaviour from their rulers. The taxes levied upon them were so excessive in amount and so unjust in incidence that the Syrians had very often to sell their children for clearing the government dues. Unwarranted persecution, confiscation of property, enslavement and impressed labour were some of the common features of the Byzantine rule.³

THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

Zoroastrianism is the oldest religion of Iran. Zarathushtra, the founder of Zoroastrianism, probably lived about 600-650 B.C. The Persian empire, after it had shaken off the Hellenistic influence, was larger in size and greater in wealth and splendour than the Eastern Roman or Byzantine empire. Ardashir I, the architect of Sasanian dynasty, laid the foundation of his

¹ T. Walter Wallbank and Alstair M. Taylor, *Civilization, past and Present* (Scott, Foresman & Co. 1954), pp. 261-62.

² *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, pp. 32, 42 and 46

³ Kurd 'Ali, *Khutat Sham*, Vol. I, p.101

kingdom by defeating Artabanus V in 224 A. D. In its heyday of glory the Sasanid Empire extended over Assyria, Khozistan, Media, Fars (Persia), Azerbaijan, Tabaristan (Mazandaran), Saraksh, Marjan, Marv, Balkh (Bactria), Saghd (Sagdonia), Sijistan (Seastene), Hirat, Khurasan, Khwarizm (Khiva), Iraq and Yemen, and, for a time, had under its control the areas lying near the delta of the river Sind, Cutch, Kathiawar, Malwa and a few other districts.

Ctesiphon (Mada'in), the capital of the Sasanids, combined a number of cities on either banks of the Tigris. During the fifth century and thereafter the Sasanid empire was known for its magnificence and splendour, cultural refinement and the life of ease and rounds of pleasure enjoyed by its nobility.

Zoroastrianism was founded, from the earliest times, on the concept of universal struggle between the ahuras and the daevas, the forces of the good and the evil. In the third century Mani appeared on the scene as a reformer of Zoroastrianism. Sapor I (240 -271) at first embraced the precepts uttered by the innovator, remained faithful to them for ten years and then returned to Mazdaism. Manichaeism was based on a most thoroughgoing dualism of the two conflicting souls in man, one good and the other bad. In order, therefore, to get rid of the latter, preached Mani, one should practice strict asceticism and abstain from women. Mani spent a number of years in exile and returned to Iran after the accession of Bahram I to the throne, but was arrested, convicted of heresy, and beheaded. His converts must have remained faithful to his teachings, for we know that Manichaeism continued to influence Iranian thought and society for a long time even after the death of Mani.¹

Mazdak, the son of Baudad, was born at Nishapur in the fifth century. He also believed in the twin principle of light and

¹ *Iran ba 'Ahd-I-Sasaniyan*, pp. 223-269

darkness but in order to put down the vile emanating from darkness, he preached community of women and goods, which all men should share equally, as they do water, fire and wind. Mazdakites soon gained enough influence, thanks to the support of Emperor Kavadh, to cause a communistic upheaval in the country. The rowdy element got liberty to take forcible possession of wives and property of other citizens. In an ancient manuscript known as *Namah Tinsar* the ravages done to the Iranian society by the application of the communistic version of Mazdaism have been graphically depicted:

Chastity and manners were cast to the dogs. There came to the fore he who had neither nobility nor character, nor acted uprightly, nor had any ancestral property; utterly indifferent to their families and the nation, they had no trade or calling; and being completely heartless they were ever willing to get into mischief, to mince the truth, vilify and malign others; for this was the only profession they knew for achieving wealth and fame.²

Arthur Christensen concludes in *Iran under the Sasanids*,

The result was that the peasants rose into revolt in many places, bandits started breaking into the houses of nobles to prey upon their property and to abduct their womenfolk. Gangsters took over the possession of landed estates and gradually the agricultural holdings became depopulated since the new owners knew nothing about the cultivation of land.²

Ancient Iran had always had a strange proclivity to subscribe to the extremist calls and radical movements, since it has ever been under the influence of irreconcilable political and religious

² *Namah Tinsar, Tab'e Maynwi*, p. 13 (Quoted from *Iran ba 'Ahd-I-Sasaniyan*, p. 477).

² *Iran ba 'Ahd-I-Sasaniyan*, p. 477.

concepts. It has often been swinging as if by action and reaction, between epicureanism and strict celibacy; and at others, either yielded passively to despotic feudalism and kingship and preposterous priesthood, or drifted to the other extreme of unruly and licentious communism; but it has always missed that moderate, poised and even temper which is so vital for a healthy and wholesome society.

Towards the end of the Sasanian Empire during the sixth century, all civil and military power was concentrated in the hands of the Emperors who were alienated from the people by an impassable barrier. They regarded themselves as the descendants of celestial gods; Khosrau Parviz or Chosroes II had lavished upon himself this grandiose surname: "The Immortal soul among the gods and Peerless God among human beings; Glorious is whose name; Dawning with the sunrise and Light of the dark-eyed night."³

The entire wealth of the country and its resources belonged to the Emperor. The kings, grandees and nobles were obsessed with amassing wealth and treasure, costly gems and curios; were interested only in raising their own standard of living and luxuriating in mirth and merriment to an extent that it is now difficult for us to understand their craze for fun and festivity. He can alone visualize their dizzy rounds of riotous living who has studied the history, literature and poetry of ancient Iran and is also well informed about the splendour of Ctesiphon, Aiwan-i-Kisra¹ and Bahar-i-Kisra,² tiara of the emperors, the awe striking court ceremonials, the number of queens and concubines, slaves, cooks and bearers, pet birds and beasts

³ *Iran ba 'Ahd-I-Sasaniyan*, p. 604.

¹ *White palace of Chosroes*. For details see *Iran ba 'Ah-I-Sasaniyan*.

² Carpet of Silk, sixty cubits in length and as many in breadth; a paradise or garden was depicted on it, the flowers, fruits, and shrubs were imitated by the figures of golden embroidery and the colours of the precious stone; and the ample square was enriched by a variegated and verdant border.

owned by the emperors and their trainers and all.¹ The life of ease and comfort led by the kings and nobles of Persia can be judged from the way Yazdagird III fled from Ctesiphon after its capture by the Arabs. He had with him, during his flight, one thousand cooks, one thousand singers and musicians, and one thousand trainers of leopards and a thousand attendants of eagles besides innumerable parasites and hangers on, but the Emperor still felt miserable for not having enough of them to enliven his drooping spirits.²

The common people were, on the other hand, extremely poor and in great distress. The uncertainty of the tariff on which each man had to pay various taxes gave a pretext to the collectors of taxes for exorbitant extractions. Impressed labour, burdensome levies and conscription in the army as footman, without the inducement of pay or any other reward, had compelled a large number of peasants to give up their fields and take refuge in the service of temples or monasteries.³ In their bloody wars with the Byzantines, which seemed to be never ending and without any interest or profit to the common man, the Persian kings had been plying their subjects as cannon fodder.⁴

INDIA

The remarkable achievement of ancient India in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, medicine and philosophy had earned her a lasting fame, but the historians are agreed that the era of her social, moral and religious degradation commenced from the opening decades of the sixth century.⁵ For shameless and revolting acts of sexual wantonness were consecrated by religion, even the temples had degenerated into cesspools of

¹ *Shahin Mikarios, Tarikh Iran*, (1898), p. 98.

² *Iran ba 'Ahd-I-Sasaniyan*, pp. 681 and 685.

³ *Shahin Mikarios: Tarikh Iran*, p. 98

⁴ *Iran ba 'Ahd-I-Sasaniyan*, Chap. V

⁵ R.C. Dutt, *Ancient India*, Vol. III

corruption.¹ Woman had lost her honour and respect in the society and so had the values attached to her chastity. It was often that the husband losing in a game of chance dealt out even his wife.⁴ The honor of the family, especially in higher classes claiming a noble descent, demanded that the widow should burn herself alive with the funeral pyre of her dead husband. The custom, upheld by society as the supreme act of fealty on the part of a widow to her late husband,² was so deeply rooted that it could be completely suppressed only after the establishment of the British rule in India.

India left behind her neighbors, or, rather every other country of the world, in evolving an inflexible and callously inhuman stratification of its society based on social inequality. This system which excluded the original inhabitants of the country as exteriors or outcasts, was formulated to ensure the superiority of conquering Aryans and was invested with an aura of divine origin by the Brahmins. It canalised every aspect of the people's daily life according to heredity and occupation of different classes and was backed by religious and social laws set forth by the religious teachers and legislators. Its comprehensive code of life was applicable to the entire society, dividing it into four distinct classes:

- (1) The Brahmins or priests enjoying the monopoly of performing religious rites;
- (2) The Kshatriyas or nobles and warriors supposed to govern the country;
- (3) The Vaisyas or merchants, peasants and artisans; and

¹ Dayanand Saraswati, *Satyarth Prakash*, p. 344

⁴ See *Mahabharat*.

² Bernier, F., *Travels*. Edited by Constable, 2 Vols. Ed. 1914

(4) The Sudras or the non-Aryan serfs meant to serve the first three castes.

The Sudras or the *dasas*, meaning slaves (forming a majority in the population), believed to have been born from the feet of Brahma, formed the most degraded class which had sunk socially to the lowest level. Nothing was more honorable for a Sudra, according to the *Manu Shastra*, than to serve the Brahmins and other higher castes.

The social laws accorded the Brahmin class distinctive privileges and an honoured place in society. “A Brahmin who remembers the *Rig Veda*,” says the *Manu Shastra*, “is absolutely sinless, even if he debases all the three worlds.” Neither any tax could be imposed on a Brahmin, nor he could be executed for any crime. The Sudras, on the contrary, could never acquire any property, nor retain any assets. Not allowed to sit near a Brahmin or touch him, the Sudras were not permitted to read the sacred scriptures.¹

India was drying up and losing her vitality. Divided into numerous petty states, struggling for supremacy amongst them, the whole country had been given to lawlessness, mal-administration and tyranny. The country had, furthermore, severed itself from the rest of the world and retired into her shell. Her fixed beliefs and the growing rigidity of her iniquitous social structure, norms, rites and customs had made her mind rigid and static. Its parochial outlook and prejudices of blood, race and color carried within it the seeds of destruction. Vidya Dhar Mahajan, formerly Professor of History in the Punjab University College, writes about the state of affairs in India on the eve of Muslim conquest:

The people of India were living in isolation from the rest

¹ For details see *the Manu Shastra*, Chap. 1, 2, 8 and 11

of the world. They were so much contented with themselves that they did not bother about what was happening outside their frontiers. Their ignorance of the developments outside their country put them in a very weak position. It also created a sense of stagnation among them. There was decay on all sides. There was not much life in the literature of the period. Architecture, painting and fine arts were also adversely affected. Indian society had become static and the caste system had become very rigid. There was no remarriage of widows and restrictions with regard to food and drink became very rigid. The untouchables were forced to live outside the towns.¹

ARABIA

The idea of virtue, of morals, was unknown to the ancient Bedouin. Extremely fond of wine and gambling, he was hardhearted enough to bury alive his own daughter. Pillage of caravans and cold blooded murder for paltry gains were the typical methods to still the demands of the nomad. The Bedouin maiden enjoyed no social status, could be bartered away like other exchangeable goods or cattle or be inherited by the deceased's heir. There were certain foods reserved for men which could not be taken by women. A man could have as many wives as he liked and could dispose of his children if he had not enough means to provide for their sustenance.²

The Bedouin was bound by unbreakable bonds of fidelity to his family, blood relations and, finally, to the tribe. Fights and forays were his sport and murder a trifling affair. A minor incident sometimes gave rise to a sanguine and long drawn warfare between two powerful tribes. Oftentimes these wars

¹ Vidya Dhar Mahajan: *Muslim Rule in India*, Delhi, 1970, p. 33.

² See the Qur'an, the books of Hadith and the poetical collections on *Ash'ar 'Arab* like *Hamasah*, *Sab'a Mu'allaqat*, etc.

continued for as many as forty years in which thousands of tribesmen came to a violent end.³

EUROPE

At the beginning of the Middle Ages the torch of knowledge flickered dimly and all the literary and artistic achievements of the classical past seemed destined to be lost forever under the young and vigorous Germanic races which had risen to political power in the northern and western parts of Europe.¹ The new rulers found neither pleasure nor honor in the philosophy, literature and arts of the nations outside their frontiers and appeared to be as filthy as their minds were filled with superstition. Their monks and clergymen, passing their lives in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of their delirious brains,² were abhorrent to the company of human beings. They still debated the point whether a woman had the soul of a human being or of a beast, or if was she blest with a finite or infinite spirit. She could neither acquire nor inherit any property nor had the right to sell or transfer the same.

Robert Briffault writes in *The Making of Humanity*,

From the fifth to the tenth century Europe lay sunk in a night of barbarism which grew darker and darker. It was a barbarism far more awful and horrible than that of the primitive savage, for it was the decomposing body of what had once been a great civilization. The features and impress of that civilization were all but completely effaced. Where its development had been fullest, e.g., in

³ Details can be seen in the poetical collection of pre-Islamic era and the books on *Akhbar-I-Arab*.

¹ Frank Thilly, *History of Philosophy*, New York, 1945, pp. 155-58.

² Leckey, W.E.H., *History of European Morals*, London, 1930, Part II, p. 46.

Italy and Gaul, all was ruin, squalor and dissolution.³

THE ERA OF DARKNESS AND DEPRESSION

The sixth century in which the Prophet of Islam was born was, to be brief, the darkest era of history: it was the most depressing period in which the crestfallen humanity had abandoned all hopes of its revival and renaissance. This is the conclusion drawn by noted historian, H. G. Wells, who recapitulates the condition of the world at the time when Sassanid and Byzantine Empires had worn themselves out to a death-like weariness:

Science and Political Philosophy seemed dead now in both these warring and decaying Empires. The last philosophers of Athens, until their suppression, preserved the texts of the great literature of the past with an infinite reverence and want of understanding. But there remained no class of men in the world, no free gentlemen with bold and independent habits of thought, to carry on the tradition of frank statement and inquiry embodied in these writings. The social and political chaos accounts largely for the disappearance of this class, but there was also another reason why the human intelligence was sterile and feverish during this age. In both Persia and Byzantium it was an age of intolerance. Both Empires were religious empires in a new way, in a way that greatly hampered the free activities of the human mind.¹

The same writer, after describing the events leading to the onslaught of the Sasanids on Byzantium and eventual victory of the latter, throws light on the depth of social and moral degradation to which both these great nations had fallen in these words:

³ Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity*, p. 164.

¹ H.G. Wells, *A Short History of the World*, London, 1924, p. 140

A prophetic amateur of history surveying the world in the opening of the seventh century might have concluded very reasonably that it was only a question of a few centuries before the whole of Europe and Asia fell under Mongolian domination. There were no signs of order or union in Western Europe, and the Byzantine and Persian Empires were manifestly bent upon a mutual destruction. India also was divided and wasted.²

WORLDWIDE CHAOS

To be brief, the entire human race seemed to have betaken itself to the steep and shortest route to self destruction. Man had forgotten his Master, and had thus become oblivious of his own self, his future and his destiny. He had lost the sense to draw a distinction between vice and virtue, good and bad; it seemed as if something had slipped through his mind and heart, but he did not know what it was. He had neither any interest nor time to apply his mind to the questions like faith and hereafter. He had his hands too full to spare even a moment for what constituted the nourishment of his inner self and the Spirit, ultimate redemption or deliverance from sin, service to humanity and restoration of his own moral health. This was the time when not a single man could be found in a whole country that seemed to be anxious about his faith, who worshipped the One and only Lord of the world without associating partners to Him or who appeared to be sincerely worried about the darkening future of humanity. This was the situation then obtaining in the world, so graphically depicted by God in the Qur'an:

“Corruption does appear on land and sea because of (the evil) which men’s hands have done, that He may make them taste a

² Ibid.

*part of that which they have done, in order that they may
return” (Qur’an 30:41).*

THE ADVENT OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

It was the will of God that the glorious sun of humanity's guidance, which was to illuminate the world without end, should rise from the orb of Arabia. For it was the darkest corner of this terrestrial globe, it needed the most radiant daystar to dispel the gloom setting on it.

God had chosen the Arabs as the standard bearers of Islam for propagating its message to the four corners of the world, since these guileless people were simple hearted, nothing was inscribed on the tablets of Their mind and heart, nothing so deep engraver as to present any difficulty in sweeping the slate clean of every impression. The Romans and the Iranians and the Indians, instinctually thrilled by the glory of their ancient arts and literatures, philosophies, cultures and civilizations were all crushed by the heavy burden of the past, that is, a conditioned reflex of touch notism had got itself indelibly etched in their minds. The imprints in the memory of the Arabs were lightly impressed merely because of their rawness and ignorance or rather their nomadic life, and thus these were liable to be obliterated easily and replaced by new inscriptions. They were, in modern phraseology, suffering from non-receptiveness which could readily be remedied while other civilized nations, having vivid pictures of the past filled in their minds, were haunted by an obsessive irrationality which could never be dismissed from their thoughts.

The Arabs, simple minded and straightforward, possessed the will of iron. If they failed to entertain a belief, they had no hesitation in taking up the sword to fight against it; but if they were convinced of the truth of an idea, they stayed with it through fire and water and were ever prepared to lay down their lives for it.

It was this psyche of the Arab mind which had found expression through Subayl b. 'Am, while the armistice of Hudaibia was being written. The document began with the words: "This is what Muhammad, the Apostle of God has agreed". Subayl promptly raised the objection, "By God, If I

witnessed that you were God's Apostle I would not have excluded you from the House of God and fought you". Again, it was the same Arab turn of mind which is reflected in the summons of 'Ikrama b. AbuJahl. Pressed hard by the assailing charge of the Byzantine forces he cried out, "What a dolt you are! I have wielded the sword against the Apostle of God. Will I turn my back upon you?" Thereafter he called out to his comrades, "Is there anyone to take the pledge of death on my hands?" Several persons immediately offered themselves and fought valiantly until they were all maimed and came to a heroic end.¹

The Arabs were frank and unassuming, practical and sober, industrious, venturesome and plain spoken. They were neither double dealers nor liked to be caught in a trap. Like a people true soured, they were always out spoken and remained firm once they had taken a decision. An incident, occurring before the hijrah of the Prophet, on the occasion of the second pledge of 'Aqaba, typically illustrates the character of the Arabs.

Ibn Is'haq relates that when Aus and Khazraj plighted their faith to the Prophet at 'Aqaba, 'Abbass b. 'Ubada of Khazraj said to his people, "O men of Khazraj, do you realise to what you are committing yourselves in pledging your support to the Prophet? It is to war against one and all. If you think that in case you lose your property and your nobles are killed you will give him up to his enemies, then do so now; for, by God, it would bring you shame in this world and the next. But if you have decided that you will be true to your words if your property is destroyed and your nobles are killed, then pledge yourselves; for, by God, it would bring you profit and success both in this world and the next." The Khazraj replied: "We will pledge our support even if we lose our property and our leaders are killed; but, O Apostle of Allah, what will we get in return for redeeming our pledge?" "Paradise", said the Prophet in reply. Thereupon they said, "Stretch forth your hand"; and when the Prophet did so, they took their oath.²

¹ Tabari, Vol. IV, p. 36

² Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 446

And, in truth and reality, the Ansar¹ lived up to their word of honour. The reply given to the Prophet on a subsequent occasion by S'ad b. Mu'adh perfectly expressed their feelings. S'ad had said to the Prophet, "By God, if you continue your march and get as far as Bark al Ghimad,² we would accompany you and if you were to cross this sea, we would plunge into it with you."³

"My Lord, this ocean has interrupted my march although I wanted to go ahead and proclaim The name in all the lands and seas⁴ were the words uttered despairingly by 'Uqba b. Nafi' on reaching the shore of the Atlantic ocean. What 'Uqba said on finding his victorious advance blocked by the ocean speaks volumes of the seriousness, absolute trust and iron will of the Arabs in accomplishing the task considered truthful by them.

The Greeks, the Byzantines and the Iranians were peoples of a different mettle. Accustomed to improving the shining hour as a godsend opportunity, they lacked the grit to fight against injustice and brutality. No ideal, no principle was attractive enough for them: no conviction or call was sufficiently potent to tug at their heartstrings in a way that they could imperil their comfort and pleasure.

Unspoiled by the nicety, polish and ostentatiousness usually produced by the display of wealth and luxury of an advanced culture, the Arabs had not developed that fastidiousness which hardens the heart and ossifies the brain, allows no emotion to catch the flame and always acts as an inhibition when one's faith or conviction demands stirring of the blood. This is the listless apathy which is hardly ever erased from one's heart.

¹ Lit. "the helpers" is the name of given to the Medinian followers of the Prophet used in contradiction to those earliest Muslims who migrated to that city with the Prophet.

² Located variously by different people, some say that Bakr al-Ghimad is a far off place in Yemen while others hold that it is in Abyssinia. What S'ad b. Mu'adh meant was that his companions would keep company of the Prophet even if he was to go the most distant place.

³ *Zad al-a'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 342-343, *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 615.

⁴ *Ibn Athir*, *Al-Kamil*, Vol. IV, p. 46

Candidly honest and true soured, the Arabs had no taste for intrigue and duplicity. They were courageous, intrepid fighters accustomed to a simple and hard life filled with dangers and spent most of their time riding on horse backs across the waterless desert. These were the rules of iron essential for a nation required to accomplish a great task, especially, in an age when adventure and enterprise were the laws of Medes and Persians.

The common ignorance of the Arabs, exempted from the shame or reproach it involves, had helped to conserve the natural briskness and intellectual energy of these people. Being strangers to philosophism and sophistry, ratiocination and lame and impotent quibbling, they had preserved their soundness of mind, despatch, resoluteness and fervidness of spirit.

The perpetual independence of Arabia from the yoke of invaders had made the Arabs free as birds; they enjoyed the benefits of human equality and beauty of living nature; and were not acquainted with the pomp or majesty or haughty demeanour of the emperors. The servile temper of the ancient Persia had, contrarily, exalted the Sasanian monarchs to supernatural beings. If any king took a medicine or was given phlebotomy, a proclamation was made in the capital that all and sundry should suspend their trades and business on that day.¹ If the king sneezed, nobody durst raise his voice to say grace, nor was anybody expected to say 'Amen' when the king sent up a prayer. The day any king paid a visit to any noble or chief was regarded an event so memorable that the elated family of the fortunate grandee instituted a new calendar from that day. It was an honour so singular that the grandee was exempted from payment of taxes for a fixed period besides enjoying other rewards, fiefs and robes of honour.²

We can imagine what a state audience of the king must have been like for those who were allowed to appear before him. By

¹ *Iran Ba 'Ahd Sasaniyan*, pp. 535-36.

² *Ibid.*, p. 543

etiquette, all the courtiers, even the highest nobles and dignitaries, were required to stand silently with their hands folded on the navel, and their heads bowed in reverence.¹ Actually, this was the ceremonial etiquette prescribed for State audience during the reign of Chosroes I (531-579), known as Anushirvan (of the Immortal Soul) and 'Adil (the Just). One can very well visualise the pompous ceremonials in vogue during the reign of Sasanid kings justly reputed as tyrants and despots.

Freedom of speech and expression (and not censure or criticism, in the least) was a luxury never indulged in by anyone in the vast kingdom of the Sasanids. Christensen has related, on the authority of Tabari, a story about Chosroes I, passing under the name of 'The dust' among the Sasanid kings, which demonstrates the freedom of expression allowed by the Iranian kings and the price paid for the imprudence of speaking out the truth.

"He assembled his council and cored the secretary for taxes to read aloud the new rates of collection. When the secretary had announced the rates, Chosroes I asked twice whether anyone had any objection to the new arrangement. Everybody remained silent but on the third time of asking, a man stood up and asked respectfully whether the king had meant to establish a tax for perpetuity on things perishable, which, as time went on, would lead to injustice. "Accursed and rash!" Cried the King, "To what class do you belong?" "I am one of the secretaries", replied the man. "Then", ordered the king, "beat him to death with pen cases". Thereupon every secretary started beating him with his pen case until the poor man died, and the beholders exclaimed: "O King, we find, all the taxes you have levied upon us, just and fail." (Iran ba 'Abd Samsayani, p. 511)

The horrible condition of the depressed classes in the then India, who were condemned as untouchables by the social and religious laws promulgated by the Aryans, baffles all human understanding. Subjected to it gruesome indignity, this unfortunate class of human

¹ Exact in the way one stands in prayer. Actually the Arabic word 'Kufr' means, etymologically, 'standing in the way' (Iranians pay respect to their Kings) (*Lisan-ul-'Arab*, Vol. VII, p. 466)

being was treated pretty much the same way as pet animals except that they resembled the species of man. According to this law, a Sudra who assaulted a Brahmin or attempted to do so, was to lose the limb with which the assault was made. The Sudra was forced to drink boiling oil if he made the pretentious claim of teaching somebody. (Manu Shastra, 10th Chapter) The penalty for killing dogs, cats, frogs, chameleons, crows and owls was the same as that for killing the Sudras.¹

Unworthy treatment of their subjects by the Sasanian Emperors had not been the lot of the common man in Byzantium, but in their pride and policy to display the titles and attributes of their omnipotence, the Caesars of Rome had all the signs of their oriental counterparts.

Victor Chopart writes about the arbitrary rule and majesty of the Roman Emperors.

"The Caesars were gods, but not by heredity, and one who rose to power would become divine in his turn, and there was no mark by which he could be recognised in advance. The transmission of the title of Augustus was governed by no regular constitutional law; it was acquired by victory over rivals, and the Senate did no more than ratify the decision of arms. This ominous fact became apparent in the first century of the Principate, which was merely a continuance of the military dictatorship."²

If we compare the servile submission of the common man of Byzantium and Persia with the spirit of freedom and pride, as well as the temperament and social conduct of the pre Islamic Arabs, we would see the difference between the social life and natural propensities of the Arabs and other nations of the world.

¹ R.C. Dutt, *Ancient Indian*, Vol. III, pp. 324 and 343

² Victor Chopart, *the Roman World*, London, 1928, p. 418

"May you be safe from frailty", and "Wish you a happy morning", were some of the salutations very often used by the Arabs to hail their kings. So solicitous were they of preserving their dignity and pride, honour and freedom that many a time they even refused to satisfy the demands of their chiefs and rulers. A story preserved by Arab historians admirably describes the rudimentary Arab virtues of courage and outspokenness. An Arab king demanded a mare known as Sikab from its owner belonging to Bani Tamim. The man flatly refused the request and instantly indited a poem of which the opening lines were:

Sikab is a nice mare, good as gold,
Too precious it is to be gifted or sold.

And, in the concluding verse he said:
To grab it from me, make no effort,
For I am competent to balk your attempt.¹

The virtues common to all Arabs, men and women, were their overweening pride, loftiness of ambition, chivalrous bearing, magnanimous generosity and a wild, invigorating spirit of freedom. We find all these features of Arab character depicted in the affair leading to the murder of 'Amr b. Hind, the King of Hira. It is related that 'Amr b. Hind once sent to 'Amr b. Kulthum, the proud cavalier and noted poet of Banu Taghlib, inviting him to pay a visit to himself, and also to bring his mother, Layla bint Muhalhil, to visit his own mother. 'Amr came to Hira from Jazira with some of his friends, and Layla came attended by a plumber of her women. Pavilions were erected between Hira and the Euphrates. In one of these pavilions 'Amr b. Hind entertained 'Amr b. Kulthum, while Layla found quarters with Hind in an adjoining tent. Now, 'Amr b. Hind had already instructed his mother to dismiss the servants before calling for dessert, and thus cause Layla. to wait upon her. Accordingly, Hind sent off her

¹ Diwan Hamasa, *Bab-ul-Hamasa*, pp. 67-68.

servants at the appointed moment and asked her guest, "O Layla, hand me that dish." Layla felt insulted and exclaimed in shame, "Let those who want anything, fetch it for themselves". Hind insisted on her demand despite Layla's refusal. At last Layla cried, "O shame! Help Taghlib, help !" 'Amr b. Kulthum got his blood up on hearing his mother's cry and seizing a sword hanging on the wall, smote the King dead with a single blow. At the same time, the tribesmen of Banu Taghlib ransacked the tents and made rapid strides back of Jazira. 'Amr b. Kulthum has narrated this story in an ode which is a fine illustration of the pre-Islamic ideal of chivalry. It was included in the Sab'a, Mu'allaqat or the Seven Suspended Odes.¹

The same Arab tradition of democracy tempered by aristocracy is to be witnessed in the meeting between the Arab envoy, Mughira b. Shu'ba, and Rustam, the Sasanian General and administrator of the empire. When Mughira entered the splendid court of Rustam, he found the latter sitting on a throne. Mughira made his way direct to Rustam, as was an Arab's wont, and sat down on the throne by the side of Rustam. Rustam's courtiers, however, lost no time in getting Mughira down from the throne of their chief. Thereupon Mughira said, "We had heard that you are a sagacious people but now I see that none is more block headed than you. We Arabs treat everybody as an equal and enslave no man save on the battlefield. I had-presumed that you would also be conducting yourselves similarly towards your own people. You should have better told us that you have exalted some amongst you as your gods; for, we would have then known that no dialogue was possible between us and you. In that case we would not have dealt with you in the way we have done, nor came to see you, although it was you who invited us here.. (Tabari, Vol. IV, p. 108)

¹ *Ibn Qutaybah, Kitab-us-Sh'ar was Shu'ara*, p. 36. These odes were awarded the annual prize at the fair of 'Ukaz and inscribed in golden letter and suspended on the wall of Ka'ba.

"There was yet another reason for the advent of the last Prophet in Arabia and it was Ka'ba, the House of God, built by Abraham and Ishmael as the centre for worship of One God.

"Lo! the first Sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Becca,¹ a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples. (Qur'an 3:96)

There is a mention of the valley of Baca in the Old Testament. The old translators of the Bible gave this word the meaning of 'a valley of weeping', but better sense seems to have prevailed later on. According to more recent of the Biblical scholars, the word 'signifies rather any valley lacking water', and 'the Psalmist apparently has in mind a particular valley whose natural condition led him to adopt that name'.² Now, this waterless valley, which can easily be identified with the valley of Mecca, has been thus mentioned in the Book of Psalms.

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;
they will still be praising thee. Selah.
Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;
in whose heart are the ways of them.

Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well," (Ps. 84:4-6) The birth of the Prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace) in the city of Mecca was really an answer to the prayer sent up by Abraham and Ishmael while laying the foundation of Ka'ba. They had beseeched God in these words:

"Our Lord! And raise up unto them an apostle from among them, who shall recite unto them Thy revelations, and shall teach them the Book and wisdom, and shall cleanse them. Verily Thou! Thou art the Mighty, the Wise."
(Qur'an 2:129)

¹ The sacred city is known both as Becca and Mecca. The Arabic alphabets be and mim are etymologically interchangeable, in many cases, such as, Lazi and Lazib, and balit without any change in their meanings.

² *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, p. 415. Also see commentary on the Holy Qur'an by 'Abdul Majid (Lahore, 1957), Vol. I, pp. 121-22 and Qazi Sulaiman Mansupuri, *Rahmatul-il-'Alamin* (Deoban, N.D.), Vol. I, p. 24.

A standing norm of God Almighty is that He always answers the prayers of those who are pious and devoted and pure in heart. The Apostles of God occupy, without doubt, a higher place than the most devout and the godliest believers. All the earlier scriptures and prophecies bear witness to this fact. Even the Old Testament testifies that the supplication of Abraham in regard to Ishmael met the approval of the Lord. The Book of Genesis says:

"And as for Ish'ma-el, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." (Gen. 17:20)

That is why the Prophet is reported to have said: "I am the (result of the) prayer of Abraham and prophecy of Jesus". (Musnad Imam Ahmad) The Old Testament still contains, notwithstanding its numerous recensions and alterations, the evidence that this prayer of Abraham was answered by God. Mark the very clear reference in the Book of Deuteronomy to the advent of a prophet.

"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethern, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." (Dt. 18:15)

Now, this being a prognosis by Moses, "thy brethren" clearly indicates that the prophet promised by God was to be raised from amongst the Ishmaelites who were the cousins of Israelites. God again reiterates His promise in the same Book:

"And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him". (Dt. 18: 17-18)

The words 'put my words in his mouth' occurring in this oracle very clearly indicate the advent of the Prophet who was to recite and deliver to his people the divine revelation exactly as he

received them. This prediction has been substantiated by the Qur'an also.

"Nor cloth he speak of (his own) desire". (Qur'an 53:3)

Again, the Qur'an says about the revelation vouchsafed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

"Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or behind it. (It is! a revelation from the Wise, the Owner Praise." (Qur'an 41:42).

But, quite unlike the Qur'an, both the Bible and its followers ascribe the authorship of the 'Books' included in the Bible to the 'ancient sages' and the 'great teachers' and never to the Divine

Author Himself. Modern Biblical scholars have reached the conclusion that:

"Ancient Jewish traditions attributed the authorship of the Pentateuch¹ (with the exceptions of the last eight verses describing Moses' death to Moses himself. But the many inconsistencies and seeming contradictions contained in it attracted the attention of the Rabbis, who exercised their ingenuity in reconciling them."²

As for the 'Books' forming part of the New Testament, the: have never been treated, either literally or in their contents to be of Divine origin, These books really contain a biographical account and anecdotes of Jesus, as narrated by the later scribes, rather than a Book of revelation sent unto the Master.³

We now come to the geographical position of Arabia, which, being connected by land and sea routes with the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe, occupied the most suitable place for being

¹ The first five books of the Old Testament.

² *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IX, p. 589

³ For detailed discussion see the Chapter "Finality of Prophethood" in the Islamic Concept of Prophethood.

chosen as the centre of enlightenment for radiating divine guidance and knowledge to the entire world. All the three continents had been cradles of great civilisations and powerful empires, while Arabia lay in the centre¹ through which passed the merchandise of all the countries,² far and near, affording an opportunity to different nations and races for exchange of thoughts and ideas. Two great empires, Sasanid and Byzantine, on either side of the Arabian peninsula, governed the history of the world. Both were large, rich and powerful, and both fought each other constantly; yet, Arabia jealously guarded her independence and never allowed either of the two powers to lay its hands on it, barring a few territories lying on its frontiers. Excepting a few peripheral tribes, the Arab of the desert was extremely sensitive to his regal dignity and untrammelled freedom, and he never allowed any despot to hold him in bondage. Such a country, unimpeded by political and social constraints, was ideally suited to become the nucleus of a Universal message preaching human equality, liberty and dignity.

For all these reasons God had selected Arabia, and the city of Mecca within it, for the advent of the Prophet to whom divine Scripture was to be sent for the last time to pave the way for proclamation of PEACE throughout the length and breadth of the world from age to age.

"Allah knoweth best with whom to place His message." (Qur'an 6:125)

¹ Dr. Hussain Kamal Uddin, Professor of Civil Engineering in the Engineering College of Riyadh University informed in an interview with the correspondent of Al-Ihram, Cairo, that according to his researches it could be proved that Mecca lay at the centre of the world. For devising an inexpensive instrument which could show the direction of the Ka'ba, he had started preparing maps showing the distance of various cities on different countries from Mecca. These maps revealed that Mecca lay in the centre of the world, which is yet another reason why it was selected by God to house the Sacred Sanctuary and to radiate Divine guidance to the four corners of the world.

² *De Lacy O'Leary, Arabia Before Muhammad*, London, 1927, pp. 179-88.

Arabia's Era of Depression:

For their manly qualities of head and heart, the Arabs deserved, or, were rather the only people entitled to the honour of the advent of the last Prophet of God amongst them and to be made responsible for propagation of the message of Islam. But, in no part of the Peninsula was there any indication of an awakening or a vexation of spirit showing the sign of life left in the Arabs. There were scarcely a few Hanif,¹ who could be counted on one's fingers, feeling their way towards monotheism but they were no more than the glowworms in a dark and chilly rainy night incapable of showing the path of righteousness to anybody or providing warmth to one being frozen to death.

This was an era of darkness and depression in the history of Arabia—a period of darkest gloom when the country had reached the rock-bottom of its putrified decadence, leaving no hope of any reform or improvement. The shape of things in Arabia presented a task far more formidable and baffling than ever faced by any messenger of God.

Sir William Muir, a biographer of the Prophet, who is ever willing to find fault with the prophet and cast reflection upon him, has vividly depicted the state of affairs in Arabia before the birth of Muhammad (on whom be peace) which discredits the view held by certain European orientalists that Arabia was fermenting for a change and looking forward to a man of genius who could respond to it better than any other. Says Sir William Muir: "During the youth of Mahomet, this aspect of the Peninsula was strongly conservative; perhaps it was never at any period more hopeless."²

¹ Ibn Is'haq mentions four men and Ibn Qutaybaa\h gives the names of half a dozen other persons of the generation before Muhammad (peace be on him), who had abandoned pagan practices to seek the Hanifiyah, the true religion of Abraham.

² Sir William Muir, *The life of Mahomet*, Vol. I, London 1858, p. ccxxviii.

Reviewing the feeble stir created by Christianity and Judaism in the dark and deep ocean of Arabian paganism, Sir William Muir remarks, "In fine, viewed thus in a religious aspect the surface of Arabia had been now and then gently rippled by the feeble efforts of Christianity; the sterner influence of Judaism had been occasionally visible in the deeper and more troubled currents; but the tide of indigenous idolatry and of Ishmaelite superstition, setting from every quarter with an unbroken and unebbing surge towards the Ka'ba, gave ample evidence that the faith and worship of Mecca held the Arab mind in a thralldom, rigorous and undisputed'.¹

"One of the most philosophical of historians has remarked that of all the revolution which have had a permanent influence upon the civil history of mankind, none could so influence upon the civil history of mankind, none could so little be anticipated by human prudence as that effected by the religion of Arabia. And at first sight it must be confessed that the Science of History, if indeed there be such a science, is at a loss to find the sequence of cause and is worthy of the name, to trace it."²

Need of a New Prophet

The old world was completely disarranged by the middle of the sixth century and man had fallen to such a depth of depravity that no reformer, revivalist or religious preacher could have hoped to put a new life in the humanity worn to its bones. The problem was not to fight any particular heresy or to its reshape a given mode of divine service, nor the question was how to curb the social evils of any society; for, there has never been any dearth of social reformers and religious preachers in any age or place. How to clear the contaminating debris of idolatry and fetishism, superstition and paganism, piling up from generation to generation during the past hundreds of years over the true teachings of the prophets sent by

¹ Sir William Muir, *The life of Mahomet*, Vol. I, London 1858, p. ccxxxix.

² R. Bosworth Smith, *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*, London, 1876, p. 105

God, was indeed a task, exceedingly toilsome and unwieldy. It was a Herculean task to make a clean sweep of this wreckage and then raise a new edifice on the foundations of piety and godliness. In short, the question was how to remake man who could think and feel differently from his predecessors as a changed an, re-born or brought back to life again.

Is he who was dead and we have raised him unto life, and set for him a light wherein he walketh among men, as him whose similitude is in utter darkness whence he cannot emerge?" (Qur'an 6:123)

In order to solve the problem of man once for all, it was necessary to root out paganism so completely that no trace of it was left in his heart, and to plant the sapling of monotheism so deeply that it should be difficult to conceive of a more secure foundation. It meant to create a penchant for seeking the pleasure of God and humbling oneself before Him, to bring into existence the longing to serve humanity, to generate the will to keep always to the right path and to sow the seeds of that moral courage which restrains all evil passions and desires. The whole problem, in a nutshell, was how to rescue the humanity, then too willing to commit suicide, from the misery of this world as well as of the next. It was an endeavour which makes a beginning in the form of a virtuous life, like that of an elect and godly soul, and then leads onto the paradise promised by God to those who are God fearing and just.

Advent of the holy Prophet was thus the greatest Divine blessing on mankind; that is how it has been so elegantly clothed in words by the Writ of God.

"And remember Allah's favour unto you; how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became brothers by His Grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it."
(Qur'an 3:103).

No task more delicate and baffling and no charge more onerous and gigantic than that entrusted to Muhammad (Peace be upon

him), the Apostle of God, was imposed on any man since birth of man on this planet. And never has a man accomplished such a huge and lasting revolution as the Last Prophet for he has guided millions of men of many nationalities to the path of justice, truth and virtue by putting a new life in the humanity at the throes of death in the sixth century. It was the greatest marvel of human history, the greatest miracle the world has ever witnessed. The well-known French poet and litterateur, Lamartine, bears witness to the grand accomplishment of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) in a language of incomparable elegance and facility.

“Never has a man set for himself, voluntarily or involuntarily, amore sublime aim, since this aim was superhuman: to subvert superstition which had been interposed between man and his Creator, to render God unto man and man unto God; to restore the rational and sacred idea of divinity amidst the chaos of the material and disfigured gods of idolatry, then existing. Never has man undertaken a work so far beyond human power with so feeble means, for he had in the conception as well as in the execution of such a great design no other instrument than himself, and no other aid, except a handful of men living in a corner of the desert.”¹

Lamartine goes on further to enumerate the achievements of the Great Prophet:

“...And more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas and the souls. On the basis of a Book, every letter of which has become Law, he created a spiritual nationality which blended together peoples of every tongue and of every race. He has left us as the indelible characteristic of this Muslim nationality, the hatred of false gods and the passion for the One and Immaterial God. This avenging patriotism against the profanation of Heaven formed the virtue of the followers of Muhammad; the conquest of one-third of the earth to his dogma

¹ Lamartine, *Historie de la Turquie*, Vol. II, Paris 11, 1854, p. 276 (Quoted from ‘Islam in the World’ by Dr. Zaki Ali, Lahore, 1974).

was his miracle; or rather it was not the miracle of man but that of reason. The idea of the Unity of God, proclaim amidst the exhaustion of fabulous theologies, was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient temples of idols and set on fire one-third of the world.”¹

This universal and enduring revolution whose objective was rejuvenation of humanity or re-building of the world anew, demanded a new prophethood surpassing the apostleship of the old, for the new Prophet had to hold aloft the banner of Divine guidance and righteous for all times to come. God has Himself explained the reason for it.

“Those who disbelieve among the People of the Scripture and the idolaters could not have left off (erring) till the clear proof came unto the, A messenger from Allah, reading purified pages containing correct scriptures.” (Qur’an 98:1-3).

¹ Lamartine, *Historie de la Turquie*, Vol. II, Paris 11, 1854, p. 276 (Quoted from ‘Islam in the World’ by Dr. Zaki Ali, Lahore, 276-7).

ARABIAN PENINSULA

Arabia is the largest peninsula on the map of the world. The Arabs call it *Jazirat ul-Arab*¹ which means the “Island of Arabia”, although it is not an island, being surrounded by water on three sides only. Lying in the south-west of Asia, the Arabian Gulf is to its east, which was known to the Greeks as the Persian Gulf; the Indian Ocean marks the southern limits; and to its west is the Red Sea which was called *Sinus Arabicus* or Arabian Gulf by the Greeks and Latins and *Bahr Qulzum* by the ancient Arabs. The northern boundary is not well-defined, but may be considered an imaginary line drawn due east from the head of the Gulf of al-‘Aqabah in the Red Sea to the mouth of the Euphrates.

The Muslim geographers have divided the country into five regions: (1) Hijaz extends from Aila (al-‘Aqabah) to Yemen and has been so named because the range of mountains running parallel to the western coast separates the low coastal belt of Tihama from Najd, (2) Tihama inside the inner range is a plateau extending to the foothills, (3) Yemen, south of Hijaz, occupies the south-west corner of Arabia, (4) Najd, the north central plateau, extends from the mountain ranges of Hijaz in the west to the deserts of Bahrain in the east and encompasses a number of deserts and mountain ranges, (5) ‘Aruz which is bounded by Bahrain to its east and Hijaz to its west. Lying between Yemen and Najd it was also known as Yamamah.²

The Land and its People

¹ The word has been commonly used since the ancient times because no distinction was made in the days of yore between a peninsula and an island nor there were separate words to denote the two. Certain scholars have tried to prove that Arabia is an Island in the Modern geographical sense, as, for instance, in the *Tarikh al-Umam al-Islamia* of ‘Allama Khudhari, but it requires to stretch the sense of the term and takes the boundaries of the Peninsula too far away from its present limits.

² This geographical division of the country is attributed to ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abbas.

One of the driest and hottest countries of the world, nine-tenths of Arabia is made up of barren desert. The geological and physical features of the land along with its climatic conditions have kept its population, in the days gone by and also in the present time, to the minimum and hindered the flowering of civilized communities and empires. The nomadic life of the desert tribes, rugged individualism of the people and unrestrained tribal warfare have tended to limit the settled population to the areas where there is abundance of rainfall or water is available on the surface of land in the shape of springs or ponds or is found nearer the surface of the earth. The Bedouins dig deep wells in the ground. The way of life in Arabia is, so to say, dictated by the availability of water; nomadic tribes continually move about in the desert in search of water. Wherever verdant land is found, the tribes go seeking pastures, but they are never bound to the land like the tillers of the soil. They stay over a pasture or oasis so long as they can graze their flocks of sheep, goats and camels and then break their camps to search for new pastures.

Life in the desert was hard and filled with danger. The Bedouin felt bound to the family and to the clan, on which depended his existence in the arid desert; loyalty to the tribe meant for him the same life-long alliance as others feel for the nation and state. His life was unstable and vagrant; like the desert, he knew not ease nor comfort; and understood only the language of power and might. The Bedouin knew no moral code—no legal or religious sanction—nothing save the traditional sentiment of his own and the tribe's honour. In short, it was a life that always brought about hardship and trouble for him and sowed the seeds of danger for the neighbouring sedentary populations.

The desert tribes of Arabia were continually engaged in an endless strife amongst themselves or made incursions into the settled lands around them. At the same time, the Arabs displayed a boundless loyalty to their tribes and traditions, were

magnanimously hospitable, honoured the treaties, were faithful friends and dutifully met the obligations of tribal customs. All these traits of Arab character are amply illustrated by their forceful and elegant literature, both in prose and poetry, proverbs, metaphors, simile and fables.

The Arab was thus a born democrat, individualistic and freedom-loving, practical-minded and realist, active and straight thinking and hated to do anything deemed vulgar or indecent by him. Not only was he content with his nomadic life and the frugal demands it made upon him, he also felt satisfied with or was rather proud of his migratory existence for it fulfilled his passionate urge for freedom. To spiritual impulses he was lukewarm although he was absolutely loyal to the ancient traditions of his tribe. The fundamental virtues of an Arab, consisting of courage, loyalty and generosity, were derived from the concept of *murauwah* (manliness); and he was never tired of singing its praises in his odes and orations.

Cultural Centres

In places where there were sufficient periodic rains or water was available in wells or springs, settlements would develop or the nomads would come together during seasonal fairs and festivals. While such gatherings exerted a civilizing influence on the life of the bedouins, the agricultural settlements reflected their specific characteristics depending on climatic conditions as well as economic and occupational features of the sedentary populations. Accordingly, Mecca had a peculiar cultural development, as other settlements like Yathrib and Hira also had their own distinguishing cultural features. Yemen was culturally the most developed region in the country owing to its long history and political developments in the recent past. Because of its suitable climate, Yemen had made rapid strides in cultivation of cereals, animal husbandry, quarry of minerals and

construction of forts and palaces. It had commercial relations with Iraq, Syria and Africa and imported different commodities.

Ethnic Divisions

Arab historians as well as old traditions of the land hold that the people of Arabia can be categorised in three broad divisions. The first of these were the '*Arab Ba'idah* (extinct Arabs) who populated the country but ceased to exist before the advent of Islam. The next were the '*Arab 'Ar'ibah* (Arabian Arabs) or Banu Qahtan who replaced the '*Arab Ba'idah* and the third were the '*Arab Must'arabah* (Arabicized Arabs) or the progeny of Ishmael which settled in Hijaz. The line of demarcation drawn according to racial division of the Arab stock makes a distinction between those descending from Qahtan¹ and 'Adnan; the former are held to be Yemenites or southern Arabs while the latter had settled in Hijaz. Arab genealogists further divide the 'Adnan into two sub-groups, which they term Rabi'a and Mudar. There had been a marked rivalry from the distant past between the Qahtan and the 'Adnan just as the Rabi'a and the Mudar had been hostile to each other. However, the historians trace the origin of the Qahtan to a remoter past from which the 'Adnan branched off at a later time² and learnt Arabic vernacular from the former. It is held that the 'Adnan were the offspring of Ishmael (Isma'il) who settled in Hijaz after naturalisation.

Arab genealogists give great weight to these racial classifications, which also find a confirmation in the attitude of Iranians in the olden times. The Iranian General Rustam had admonished his courtiers who had derided Mughira b. Shu'ba and looked down upon him for having presented himself as the

¹ The Joktan of the Old Testament.

² Some experts of the modern times hold the view that the 'Adnan are really the '*Arab 'Aribah* and form the original stock. Others who disagree with this view argue that the division made by earlier historians is based on the Yemenite stock after the advent of Islam and not prior to it.

envoy of Muslims in tattered clothes, Rustam then said to his counselors, “You are all fools... The Arabs give little importance to their dress and food but are vigilant about their lineage and family.”³

Linguistic Unity

Multiplicity of dialects and languages should not have been at all surprising in a country so big as Arabia (actually, equal to a sub-continent), divided into north and south, not only by the trackless desert, but also by the rivalry of kindred races and clannish patriotism of a passionate, chauvinistic type, affording but little opportunity for intermixing and unification of the country's population. The tribes living in the frontier regions close to the Iranian and Byzantine empires were, quite naturally, open to influences of alien elements. Numerous factors gave rise to a number of languages in Europe and the Indian subcontinent. In India alone, fifteen languages have been officially recognised by the Constitution of India while there are still people who have to speak in an official language other than their own mother tongue or take recourse to English for being understood by others.

But, the Arabian peninsula has had, despite its vastness and proliferation of tribes, a common language ever since the rise of Islam. Arabic has been the common *lingua franca* of the bedouins living in the deserts as well as of the sedentary and cultured populations like the Qahtan and 'Adnan. Some local variations in the dialects of various regions arising from differences of tones and accents, wide distances and diversity of physical and geographical conditions could not be helped, yet there has always been a linguistic uniformity which has made the Qur'an intelligible to all. It has also been helpful in the rapid diffusion of Islam to the far-flung tribes of Arabia.

³ Ibn Kathir, *AL-Bidayah Wan-Nihayah*, Vol. VIII, p. 40.

Arabia in Ancient History

Archaeological excavations show the existence of human habitation in Arabia during the earliest period of the Stone Age. These earliest remains pertain to Chellean period of Paleolithic epoch. The people of Arabia mentioned in the Old Testament throw light on the relations between the Arabs and ancient Hebrews between 750 to 200 B.C. Similarly, the Talmud also refers to the Arabs. Josephus (37 a.c.—100) gives some valuable historical and geographical details about the Arabs and Nabataeans.¹ There are many more Greek and Latin writings of pre-Islamic era, enumerating the tribes living in the Peninsula and giving their geographical locations and historical details, which, notwithstanding the mistakes and inconsistencies in them, are inestimable sources of information about ancient Arabia. Alexandria was also one of those important commercial centers of antiquity which had taken a keen interest in collecting data about Arabia, its people and the commodities produced in that country for commercial purposes.

The classical writers first to mention the Arabians in the Greek literature were Aeschylus (525-465 B.C.) and Herodotus (484-425 B.C.). Several other writers of the classical period have left an account of Arabia and its inhabitants. Of these, Claudius Ptolemaeus of Alexandria was an eminent geographer of the second century, whose *Almagest* occupied an important place in the curriculum of Arabic schools. Christian sources also contain considerable details about Arabia during the pre-Islamic and early Islamic era although these were primarily written to describe Christianity and its missionary activities in that country.

¹ Especially in *Jewish Antiquities*, ed. S.A. Naber, Leipzig, 1888

The numerous references made to the “Ereb”² in the Old Testament are synonymous with the nomadic tribes of Arabia since the word means desert in Semitic and the characteristics of the people described therein apply to the Bedouins. Similarly, the Arabs mentioned in the writings of the Greeks and Romans as well as in the New Testament were Bedouins who used to make plundering raids on the frontier towns of Roman and Byzantine empires, despoiled the caravans and imposed extortionate charges on the traders and wayfarers passing through their territories. Diodorus Siculus, a classical writer of Sicily in the second half of the first century B.C., affirms that the Arabians are “self reliant and independence-loving, like to live in the open desert and highly prize and value their liberty.”¹ The Greek historian Herodotus (484-425 B.C.) also makes a similar remark about them. “They revolt against every power,” he says, “which seeks to control their freedom or demean them.”² The passionate attachment of the Arabs to their personal freedom had been admired by almost all Greek and Latin writers.

The acquaintance of the Arabs with the Indians and their commercial and cultural relations with India began in the days long before the advent of Islam and its conquest of India. Modern researches on the subject show that of all the Asiatic countries, India was closest to Arabia and well-acquainted with it.³

Earlier Revealed Religions of Arabia

Arabia had been the birth-place of several prophets of God in the bygone times. The Qur’an says:

² Is. 21: 13, 13:20 and Jer. 3:2

¹ *Bibliotheca Historica*, Book II, Chapt. 1, & 5.

² *Herodotus, History*, Book III, Chap. 88.

³ For details see *Arab our Hind ke T’aluqat* by S. Sulaiman Nadwi.

“And make mention (O Muhammad) of the brother of A’ad when he warned his folk among the wind-curved sandhills—and verily warners came and went before and after him—saying: Serve none but Allah. Lo! I fear for you the doom of a tremendous Day” (Qur’an 46:21).

Prophet Hud⁴ was sent to the A’ad; a people, according to historians, belonging to the ‘Arab Ba’idah who lived in a tract of white or reddish sand blown into hill banks or dunes and covering a vast area to the southwest of al-Rabe al-Khali (the vacant quarter) near Hadramaut. This region has no habitation and is void of the breath of life, but it was a verdant land in the ancient times, with flourishing towns inhabited by a people of gigantic strength and stature. The whole area was consumed by a fearful and roaring wind which covered it with sand dunes.¹

The Quranic verse quoted above shows that the Prophet Hud was not the only messenger of God sent to the ancient Arabs of this area as many more ‘warners came and went before him’.

Salih² was another Arabian Prophet sent to the people called Thamud who lived in al-Hijr situated between Tabuk and Hijaz. Prophet Isma’il was brought up in Mecca, and he died in the same city. If we extend the frontiers of the Arabian peninsula northwards to include Midian on the borders of Syria, Prophet Shu’yeb (identified with Jethro) would also be reckoned as an Arabian prophet. The historian Abul Fida says that Midianites were Arabs, living in Midian near Ma’an, which is adjacent to the Sea of Lut (Dead Sea) in Syria on the frontier of Hijaz. The Midianites flourished after the downfall of the people of Lut.

⁴ Recognized by some as Heber of the Bible (Judges iv-1).

¹ For details see the Chapter “The Reality” of the Qur’an.

² Identified by some as Salah of Genesis xi-13.

Ancient Arabia had been the cradle of many a civilised and flourishing people to whom God had sent His apostles. But all of them were either destroyed because of their evil ways or became strangers in their own homeland, or were forced to seek new homes. The prophets of God born in the lands far away had sometimes to seek refuge in Arabia from the despotic kings of their lands. Ibrahim (Abraham) had migrated to Mecca and Moses had to flee to Midian. Followers of other religions, too, had to seek shelter in Arabia. The Jews, when persecuted by the Romans, had settled in Yemen and Yathrib while several Christian sects harassed by the Byzantine Emperors had migrated to Najran.³

³ For further details see Vol. I of *Kathim-un-Nabiyin* by Shekh Muhammad Abu Zuhra.

MECCA, BEFORE THE PROPHET

Isma'il in Mecca

The Patriarch Ibrahim (Abraham) came down to the valley of Mecca surrounded by mountains, naked rocks and bare and rugged crags. Nothing to sustain life, neither water nor verdure, nor food grains, was to be found there. He had with him his wife Hajirah (Hagar) and their son Isma'il (Ishmael). Ibrahim had wandered through the deserts of Arabia in order to move away from the wide-spread heathen cult of idol-worship and to set up a centre for paying homage to the One and Only God where he could invite others to bow down before the Lord of the world. He wanted to lay the foundation of a lighthouse of guidance, a sanctuary of peace which should become the radiating centre of true monotheism, faith and righteousness.¹

God blessed the sincerity of Ibrahim and the dry valley of this wild country. Ibrahim had left his wife and his infant son in this inhospitable territory. Here, in the midst of rugged hills, the Master of all the worlds manifested His grace by causing water to issue forth from the earth which is called the well of Zamzam to this day. When Isma'il was a few years old, Ibrahim went to visit his family in Mecca. Ibrahim now made up his mind to sacrifice Isma'il for the sake of God, for the Lord had commanded him in a dream: 'Offer up thy son Isma'il'. Obedient to the Lord as he was, Isma'il at once agreed to have his throat cut by his father. But, God saved Isma'il, and instituted² the 'day of great sacrifice', in order to commemorate the event for all times, since, he was destined to help Ibrahim in his mission and become the progenitor of the last Prophet as well as of the nation charged to disseminate the message of God and to struggle for it to the end of time.

¹ See the Chapter 'the Cow' and 'Abraham' of the Qur'an.

² See the Chapter 'Those who set the Ranks' of the Qur'an.

Ibrahim came back to Mecca again¹ and assisted by his son Isma'il, built the House of God. While the father and the son occupied themselves in the work, they also beseeched God to confer His grace; cause them to live as well as die in Islam; and help their progeny to keep a watch over their patrimony of monotheism, not only by protecting their mission against every risk or peril but also by becoming its standard-bearers and preachers, braving every danger and sacrificing everything for its sake until their call reached the farthest corner of the world. They also supplicated God to raise up a prophet, amongst their offsprings, who should renovate and revive the summons of Ibrahim and bring to completion the task initiated by him.

"And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House, (Abraham prayed); Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower. (Qur'an 2:127)

"Our Lord! and make us submissive unto Thee and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and relent toward us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful. (Qur'an 2:128)

"Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Thy revelations, and shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall make them grow. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, the Wise. (Qur'an 2:129)

The prayer sent up by Ibrahim included the request that the House he was constructing might become a sanctuary of peace and God might keep his progeny away from idol worship. Ibrahim held nothing more in abomination than idolatrousness, nor deemed anything more fraught with danger for his progeny, for he knew the fate of earlier idolatrous nations. He was aware how the great prophets of God had earlier struggled and fought this evil throughout their lives, but in no long time after their departure

¹ Jewish legends tell how Abraham went secretly visit Ishamel in the wilderness (cf. D. Sideersky, *Les Origines des legendes usulans dans le Corane et dans les vies des prophet*, Paris, Geuthner, 1933, pp. 51-53.

from the world their people were again misled into fetishism by devil's advocates disguised as promoters of faith.

Ibrahim had implored the Lord to bless his descendants with his own spirit of struggle against the evil of pantheism and idolatry. He wanted his heirs to carry into their thoughts how he had to strive all his life for the sake of Truth and Faith; how he had to bid farewell to his hearth and home; realise why he had incurred the wrath of his idolatrous father; and appreciate the wisdom behind his making a selection of that valley, unbelievably bare with no scrap of soil, sheer from top to bottom and jagged and sharp for their habitation. He wanted them to understand why he had preferred that wilderness, holding no prospects of progress and civilisation, over verdant lands and flourishing towns and centres of trade, arts and commerce where one could easily meet one's wishes.

Ibrahim had invoked the blessings of God on his sons so that they might be esteemed and adored by all the nations of the world; that the people of every nation and country might become attached to his children; that they should come from every nook and corner of the world to pay homage to his posterity and thus become a means of satisfying their needs in that barren country

"And when Abraham said: My Lord! Make safe this territory, and preserve me and my sons from serving idols. (Qur'an 14:35)

"My Lord! Lo! They have led many of mankind astray. But whoso followeth me, he verily is of me. And whoso disobeyeth me still Thou art Forgiving, Merciful. (Qur'an 14:36.)

"Our Lord! Lo! I have settled some of my posterity in an uncultivable valley near unto Thy holy House, our Lord! that they may establish proper worship; so incline some hearts of men that they may yearn toward them, and provide Thou them with fruits in order that they may be thankful. (Qur'an 14:37)

The Quraish

God answered each and every prayer sent up by Ibrahim and Isma'il. The descendants of Isma'il multiplied exceedingly, so that the barren valley overflowed with the progeny of Ibrahim. Isma'il took for his wife a girl of the tribe of Jurhum,¹ a clan belonging to the 'Arab 'Aribah. In the lineal descendants of Isma'il, 'Adnan was born whose lineage was universally recognised as the most worthy and noble among them. The Arabs being too particular about the purity of race and blood, have always treasured the genealogy of 'Adnan's progeny in the store house of their memory.

'Adnan had many sons of whom Ma'add was the most prominent. Among the sons of Ma'add, Mudar was more distinguished; then Fihir b. Malik in the lineage of Mudar achieved eminence; and finally the descendants of Fihir b. Malik b. Mudar came to be known as Quraish. Thus came into existence the clan of Quraish, the nobility of Mecca, whose lineage and exalted position among the tribes of Arabia as well as whose virtues of oratory and eloquence, civility, gallantry and high mindedness were unanimously accepted by all. The recognition accorded to the Quraish without a dissentient voice throughout the Peninsula became, in due course of time, a genuine article of faith to the people of Arabia.²

Qusayy B. Kilab

Qusayy 1). Kilab was born in the direct line of Fihir but the hegemony of Mecca had, by that time, passed on from Jurhum's clansmen to the hands of the Khuza'ites. Qusayy b. Kilab recovered the administration of the K'aba and the town through his organising capacity and superior qualities of head and heart.

¹ The tribe of Jurhum is supposed to be the first tribe which had settled in the valley of Mecca because of the inexhaustible spring of water existing there. There are others who hold that when Ibrahim left his wife and son in the valley, the tribe of Jurhum was already there.

² For details see *Sirat Ibn Hisham* and other works on the genealogy of Arabs.

The Quraish strengthened the hands of Qusayy b. Kilab in dislodging the Khuza'ites from the position of leadership usurped by them. Qusayy was now master of the town, loved and respected by all. He held the keys of the K'aba and the rights to water the pilgrims from the well of Zamzam, to feed the pilgrims¹ to preside at assemblies and to hand out war banners. In his hands lay all the dignities of Mecca and nobody entered the K'aba until he opened it for him. Such was his authority in Mecca during his lifetime that no affair of the Quraish was decided but by him, and his decisions were followed like a religious law which could not be infringed.

After the death of Qusayy his sons assumed his authority but 'Abdu Munaf amongst them was more illustrious. His eldest son, Hashim b. 'Abdu Munaf conducted the feeding and watering of the pilgrims, and, after his death the authority passed on to 'Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of the Prophet. His people held him in the highest esteem and such was the popularity gained by him, so they say, as was never enjoyed by anybody amongst his ancestors.²

Bani Hashim

The progeny of Hashim, who now filled the stage and assumed a commanding position among the Quraish, was like a stream of light in the darkness of Arabia. The sketches of Bani Hashim preserved by the historians and genealogists, although fewer in number, eloquently speak of the nobility of their character and moderation of their disposition, the reverence they paid to the House of God, their sovereign contempt for the things unjust and uneven, their devotion to fairplay and justice, their willingness to help the poor and the oppressed, their magnanimity of heart, their valour and horsemanship, in short, of every virtue admired by the Arabs of the pagan past. Bani Hashim, however, shared the faith of their contemporaries which had beclouded the light of their

¹ A general, deemed to be the guest of Rahman, were invited. The Quraysh contributed a specified sum for it Al-Khudri, p. 36.

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I (The sons of 'Adnan)

soul; but despite this failing, they had to have all this goodness as the forefathers of the great Prophet who was to inherit their ennobling qualities and to, illustrate them by his own shining example for the guidance of the entire human race.

Meccan Paganism

The Quraish continued to glorify the Lord of the worlds, from whom all blessings flow, like their forefathers Ibrahim and Isma'il until 'Amr b. Luhayy became the chief of Khuza'ites. He was the first to deviate from the religion of Isma'il; he set up idols in Mecca and bade the people to worship and venerate them, he instituted the custom of sa'iba¹ which were to be held in reverence. 'Amr b. Luhayy also modified the divine laws of permissible and impermissible. It is related that once 'Amr b. Luhayy went from Mecca to Syria on some business where he found the people worshipping idols. He was so impressed by the ways of the idol worshippers that he obtained a few idols from them, brought them back to Mecca and asked the people there to pay divine honours to them.²

It might have been so, or, perhaps, on his way to Syria 'Amr b. Luhayy had happened to pass through Betra which was variously known to ancient historians and geographers as Petraea and Petra. It was the key city on the caravan route between Saba and the Mediterranean, located on an arid plateau three thousand feet high, to the south of what is today called Transjordan, as mentioned by the Greek and Roman historians. The city was founded by the Nabataeans, ethnically an Arab tribe, in the early part of the sixth century B. C. These people carried their merchandise to Egypt, Syria, valley of the Euphrates and to Rome. Most likely, they took

¹ Bulls dedicated to the idols and not used for any other purpose.

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 76-77. It is related that the Prophet once said: "I saw 'Amr b. Luhayy dragging his intestines in the Hell as he was the first to institute the custom of dedicating beast to the idols as Sa'iba. (Bukhari, usli, Ahmad). Another tradition related by Muhammad b. Is'haq says: "He was the first to change the religion of Ismail, to set up idols and to institute customm of Sa'iba.

the way to the valley of the Euphrates through Hijaz. The Nabataeans were an idolatrous people who made their deities of graven stones. Some historians hold the view that al-Lat, the famous deity of the Northern Hijaz during the pre-Islamic period, had been originally imported from Petra and was assigned an honoured place among the local gods and goddess.¹

The above view finds a confirmation in the History of Syria by Philip K. Hitti who writes about the religion of Nabataean kingdoms:

"At the head of the pantheon stood Dushara (dhu-al-Shara, Dusara), a sun deity worshipped under the form of an obelisk or an unknown four-cornered black stone.... Associated with Dushara was Allat, chief goddess of Arabia. Other Nabataean goddesses cited in the inscriptions were Manat and al-'Uzza, of Koranic fame, Hubal also figures in the inscriptions.²

It is noteworthy that the above description relates to a period when idolatry had, in different forms and shapes, engulfed Arabia and the countries around it. Jesus Christ and his disciples had not yet appeared on the scene who later on laboured to restrain its unbridled expansion. Judaism had already proved its incompetence to the task, since, being essentially a racial religion, it allowed none save the children of Bani Israel to join his faith to the creed of monotheism preached by it.

Another writer, De Lacy O'Leary, tracing the influences responsible for introduction of idol worship in the Arabian peninsula sums up his findings in the "Arabia Before Muhammad" in these words:

¹ The author happened to visit Petra in 14th August, 1973, as a member of the delegation of Rabita 'Alam-I-Islami, where he saw a large number of idols hewn in the mountains. The details can be seen in another work of the author 'Darya'I Kabul Se darya'I Yaruk Tak.

² . Philip K. Hitti, History of Syria, London, 1951, p. 384-5.

"It seems fairly safe therefore to understand that the use of images was an instance of Syro-Hellenistic culture which had come down the trade-route; it was a recent introduction in Mecca in the time of the Prophet and was probably unknown to the Arab community at large. (P. 197)

Worship the idols was thus the popular creed of the people in the valley of the Euphrates and the lands to the east of Arabia. As the Arabians were bound, since times immemorial, by the ties of commerce with these countries, it is not unlikely that their cultural influence was responsible for grafting idolworship within the Arabian Peninsula. In his history of Ancient Iraq Georges Roux says that during the third century 13. C. and 1000 thereafter idol-worship was very popular in Mesopotamia.¹ Its every city, old or new, gave shelter to several foreign gods besides the local deities.²

There are also reports which suggest that idol worship gradually; came into vogue among the Quraish. In olden times, as some historians relate, when anybody went out on a long journey from Mecca he took a few stones from the enclosures of the sanctuary as a mark of grace with him. In due course of time, they started venerating the monoliths they admired most. The subsequent generations, not knowing the reason for holding such monoliths in esteem, started worshipping them like other pagan people of the surrounding countries.³ The Quraish, however, remained attached to some of the older traditions like paying deference to the holy sanctuary, its circumambulation, Hajj⁴ and 'Umra.⁵ The gradual evolution of different religions showing substitution of means for

¹ George Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, Suffolk, 1972, pp. 383-84

² *Ibid.*, pp. 383-84

³ In order to know the names of the earliest deities of Arabia and how they came to worship graven images see *Al-Asnam lil-Kalabi'* and Vol. II and the *Bulugh al-Arab fi Ma'rafate Ahwal-il-'Arab* by Syed Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi.

⁴ The pilgrimage to Mecca performed in the month of Zul Hijja, the twelfth month of the Islamic year.

⁵ The Lesser pilgrimage to the holy sanctuary performed at any time other than the occasion of Hajj.

the ends and the slow progression from suppositions to conclusions lend support to the view put forth by the historians about the beginning of idol worship among the Quraish. The esteem and reverence in which even certain misguided Muslims sects come to hold the portraits and sepulchres of the saints and the way they sluggishly adopt this course possesses an incriminating evidence in support of the gradual evolution of idol worship. That is why the Islamic Shari'a completely stalls all those tracks and alleys which lead to the undue veneration of personages, places and relics for they ultimately lead to ascribing partners to God.¹

THE ELEPHANTS

It was during this period that a significant event, unparalleled in the history of Arabia, came to pass which portended something of vital importance likely to take place in the near future. It augured well for the Arabs, in general, and predicted a unique honour for the K'aba, never attained by any place of worship anywhere in the world. The incident afforded hope for expecting a great future for the K'aba—a future on which depended the destiny of religions or rather the entire humanity since it was soon to unfold itself in the shape of an eternal message of righteousness and peace.

An Implicit Belief of the Quraish

¹ The Shari'a as well as authentic tradition of the Prophet contain innumerable injunctions showing disapproval of paganish superstition savouring of Shirk or plurality deities. Some of the well-known Traditions of the Prophet on the subject say: 'Do not make my grave a place of mirth and festivity nor should you hold fairs over it'. "Only with the intention of paying a visit to the three Mosques one is permitted to make journey". "Never pay compliments to me in the way Christian extol Jesus, son of Mary". There are many more similar Traditions prohibited shirk. And, same is the reason forbidding the making of portraits of living things.

In the days of yore, many a people had taken to idol worship through venerating the portraits or the images of their saints. Ibn Kathir writes, on the authority of Muhammad b. Qays, that there were a large number of persons pious and pure in spirit between the period from Adam to Noah, who had a large number of followers. After these men of God had departed from the world, their followers had the idea of making their portraits which they thought would keep their memory fresh and help them in concentration during prayers. Those who came after this generation were misled by the devil in thinking that their forefathers paid divine honours to these images which helped to bring rains to them. Thus, they gradually fell to idol worship.

The Quraish had always held the belief that the Bait-ullah or the House of God had a special place of honour in the eyes of the Lord Who was Himself its protector and defender. The trust placed by the Quraish in the inviolability of the K'aba is amply borne out by the conversation between Abraha and 'Abdul Muttalib. It so happened that Abraha seized two hundred camels belonging to 'Abdul Muttalib, who, then, called upon him and sought permission to see Abraha. Abraha treated 'Abdul Muttalib with the greatest respect and got off his throne and made him sit by his side. Asked to tell the purpose of his visit, 'Abdul Muttalib replied that he wanted the King to return his two hundred camels which the King had taken.

Abraha, taken by surprise, asked 'Abdul Muttalib, "Do you wish to talk about your two hundred camels taken by me, but you say nothing about the House on which depend your religion and the religion of your forefathers, which I have come to destroy?" 'Abdul Muttalib boldly replied "I am the owner of the camels and the House has an Owner Who will Himself defend it". Abraham said again, "How can it be saved from me?"

"This is a matter between you and Him", replied 'Abdul Muttalib. (Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 49-50).

Who could dare to do harm or cast a blighting glance at the House of God? Its protection was, in truth, the responsibility of God.

The episode, briefly, was that Abraha al-Ashram, who was the viceroy of Negus, the King of Abyssinia, in Yemen built an imposing cathedral in San'a and gave it the name of al-Qullays. He intended to divert the Arab's pilgrimage to this cathedral. Being a Christian Abraha had found it intolerably offensive that the K'aba should remain the great national shrine, attracting crowds of pilgrims from almost every Arabian clan. He desired that his cathedral should replace K'aba as the most sacred chapel of Arabia.

This was, however, something inglorious for the Arabs. Veneration of the K'aba was a settled disposition with the Arabs: they neither equated any other place of worship with the K'aba nor they could have exchanged it with anything howsoever precious. The perturbation caused by the declared intentions of Abraha set the matter on fire. Some Kinanite dare-devils accepted the challenge and one of them defiled the cathedral by defecating in it. Now, this caused a serious tumult. Abraha was enraged and he swore that he would not take rest until he had destroyed the K'aba.

Abraha took the road to Mecca at the head of a strong force which included a large number of elephants. The Arabs had heard awesome stories about elephants. The news made them all confused and bewildered. Some of the Arab tribes even tried to obstruct the progress of Abraha's army, but they soon realised that it was beyond their power to measure swords with him. Now, hoping against hope, they left the matter to God putting their trust in Him to save the sacred sanctuary.¹

The Quraish took to the hills and craggy gorges in order to save themselves from the excesses of Abraha's soldiers. 'Abdul Muttalib and a few other persons belonging to the Quraish took hold of the door of the K'aba, praying and imploring God to help them against Abraha. On the other side, Abraha drew up his troops to enter the town and got his elephant 'Mahmud' ready for attack. On his way to the city, the elephant knelt down and did not get up in spite of severe beating. But when they made it face Yemen, it got up immediately and started off. God then sent upon them flocks of birds, each carrying stones in its claws. Everyone who was hit

¹ It is just possible that Abraha might have an objective deeper than the avowed purpose of avenging upon the K'aba a sacrilege committed by an individual. He might have intended to gain control over Mecca so that he might be able to strengthen Christianity in Arabia by opening the road on which depended the contact of Yemen with Syria. The step taken by Abraha was beneficial both of the Byzantium and Abyssinia, for both were Christian kingdoms. Whatever might have been the reason, the objective of Abraha could not have been achieved without removing the national temple of the Arabians, which was destined to become the centre of the last Prophethood. And, therefore, God had willed it otherwise. It is also possible that the Byzantines might have urged Abraha to conquer Mecca since this was the only way to weaken the influence of Sasanids who were the only power the Byzantines had then to face in Arabia.

by these stones died. The Abyssinians thereupon withdrew in fright by the way they had come, continually being hit by the stones and falling dead in their way. Abraha, too, was badly smitten, and when his soldiers tried to take him back, his limbs fell one by one, until he met a miserable end on reaching San'a.¹ The incident finds a reference in the Qur'an also.

"1. Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the owners of the Elephant ?

"2. Did He not bring their stratagem to naught,

"3. And send against them swarms of flying creatures,

"4. Which pelted them with stones of baked clay,

"5. And made them like green crops devoured (by cattle). (Qur'an 105:1-5)

Repercussions of Abraha's Failure

When God turned back the Abyssinians from Mecca, crushed and humbled, and inflicted His punishment upon them, the Arabs, naturally, looked up to the Quraish in great respect. They said: "Verily, these are the people of God: God defeated their enemy—and they did not have even to fight the assailants." The esteem of the people for the K'aba naturally increased strengthening their conviction in its sanctity.²

It was undoubtedly a miracle; a sign of the advent of a Prophet who was to cleanse the K'aba of its contamination of idols. It was an indication that the honour of the K'aba was to rise with the final dispensation to be brought by him. One could say that the incident foretold the advent of the great Prophet.

The Arabians attached too much importance, and rightly too, to this great event. They instituted a new calendar from the date of its occurrence. Accordingly, we find in their writings such references as that a certain event took place in the year of Elephant or that

¹ Ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, pp. 43-57

² Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 57.

such and such persons were born in that year or that a certain incident came to pass so many years after the Year of Elephant. This year of miracle was 570 A. D.

MECCA, BEFORE THE PROPHET

Isma'il in Mecca

The Patriarch Ibrahim (Abraham) came down to the valley of Mecca surrounded by mountains, naked rocks and bare and rugged crags. Nothing to sustain life, neither water nor verdure, nor food grains, was to be found there. He had with him his wife Hajirah (Hagar) and their son Isma'il (Ishmael). Ibrahim had wandered through the deserts of Arabia in order to move away from the widespread heathen cult of idol-worship and to set up a centre for paying homage to the One and Only God where he could invite others to bow down before the Lord of the worlds. He wanted to lay the foundation of a lighthouse of guidance, a sanctuary of peace which should become the radiating centre of true monotheism, faith and righteousness.¹

God blessed the sincerity of Ibrahim and the dry valley of this wild country. Ibrahim had left his wife and his infant son in this inhospitable territory. Here, in the midst of rugged hills, the Master of all the worlds manifested His grace by causing water to issue forth from the earth, which is called the well of Zamzam to this day. When Isma'il was a few years old, Ibrahim went to visit his family in Mecca. Ibrahim now made up his mind to sacrifice Isma'il for the sake of God, for the Lord had commanded him in a dream: "Offer up your son Isma'il." Obedient to the Lord as he was, Isma'il at once agreed to have his throat cut by his father. But, God saved Isma'il, and instituted² the "day of great sacrifice," in order to commemorate the event for all times, since Isma'il was destined to help Ibrahim in his mission and become the progenitor of the last Prophet as well as of the nation charged to disseminate the message of God and to struggle for it to the end of time.

¹ See the Chapters "the Cow" and "Abraham" of the Qur'an.

² See the Chapter "Those who set the Ranks" of the Qur'an.

Ibrahim came back to Mecca again¹ and, assisted by his son Isma'il, built the House of God. While the father and the son occupied themselves in the work, they also beseeched God to confer His grace; cause them to live as well as die in Islam; and help their progeny to keep a watch over their patrimony of monotheism, not only by protecting their mission against every risk or peril but also by becoming its standard-bearers and preachers, braving every danger and sacrificing everything for its sake until their call reached the farthest corner of the world. They also supplicated God to raise up a prophet, among their offspring, who should renovate and revive the summons of Ibrahim and bring to completion the task initiated by him.

*“And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations
of the House,*

*(Abraham prayed), ‘Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo!
You, only You, are the Hearer, the Knower.*

*Our Lord! Make us submissive unto You and of our seed a
nation submissive unto You, and show us our ways of worship,
and relent toward us. Lo! You, only You, are the Relenting, the
Merciful.*

*Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from
among them who shall recite unto them Your revelations, and
shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall
make them grow. Lo! You, only You, are the Mighty, the Wise’”
(Qur'an 2:127-129).*

The prayer made by Ibrahim included the request that the House he was constructing might become a sanctuary of peace and God might keep his progeny away from idol worship. Ibrahim held nothing more in abomination than idolatry, nor deemed anything more fraught with danger for his progeny, for he knew the fate

¹ Jewish legends tell how Abraham would secretly visit Ishmael in the wilderness (cf. D. Sideersky, *Les Origines des legendes usulans dans le Corane et dans les vies des prophet*, Paris, Geuthner, 1933, pp. 51-53).

of earlier idolatrous nations. He was aware how the great prophets of God had earlier struggled and fought this evil throughout their lives, but in no long time after their departure from the world their people were again misled into fetishism by devil's advocates disguised as promoters of faith.

Ibrahim had implored the Lord to bless his descendants with his own spirit of struggle against the evil of pantheism and idolatry. He wanted his heirs to carry into their thoughts how he had to strive all his life for the sake of Truth and Faith; how he had to bid farewell to his hearth and home; realise why he had incurred the wrath of his idolatrous father; and appreciate the wisdom behind his making a selection of that valley, unbelievably bare with no scrap of soil, sheer from top to bottom and jagged and sharp for their habitation. He wanted them to understand why he had preferred that wilderness, holding no prospects of progress and civilisation, over verdant lands and flourishing towns and centres of trade, arts and commerce where one could easily meet one's wishes.

Ibrahim had invoked the blessings of God on his sons so that they might be esteemed and adored by all the nations of the world; that the people of every nation and country might become attached to his children; that they should come from every nook and corner of the world to pay homage to his posterity and thus become a means of satisfying their needs in that barren country

*“And when Abraham said, ‘My Lord! Make safe this territory,
and preserve me and my sons from serving idols.*

*My Lord! Lo! They have led many of mankind astray. But
whosoever follows me, he verily is
of me. And whosoever disobeys me, still You are Forgiving,
Merciful.*

*Our Lord! Lo! I have settled some of my posterity in an
uncultivable valley near unto Your holy House, our Lord, that*

they may establish proper worship; so incline some hearts of men that they may yearn toward them, and provide them with fruits in order that they may be thankful” (Qur'an 14:35-37).

The Quraish

God answered each and every prayer sent up by Ibrahim and Isma'il. The descendants of Isma'il multiplied exceedingly, so that the barren valley overflowed with the progeny of Ibrahim. Isma'il took for his wife a girl of the tribe of Jurhum,¹ a clan belonging to the 'Arab 'Aribah. In the lineal descendants of Isma'il, 'Adnan was born whose lineage was universally recognised as the most worthy and noble among them. The Arabs being so particular about the purity of race and blood have always treasured the genealogy of 'Adnan's progeny in the storehouse of their memory.

'Adnan had many sons, of whom Ma'add was the most prominent. Among the sons of Ma'add, Mudar was most distinguished; then Fihir b. Malik in the lineage of Mudar achieved eminence; and finally the descendants of Fihir b. Malik b. Mudar came to be known as Quraish. Thus came into existence the clan of Quraish, the nobility of Mecca, whose lineage and exalted position among the tribes of Arabia as well as whose virtues of oratory and eloquence, civility, gallantry and high mindedness were unanimously accepted by all. The recognition accorded to the Quraish without a dissentient voice throughout the Peninsula became, in due course of time, a genuine article of faith to the people of Arabia.²

¹ The tribe of Jurhum is supposed to be the first tribe which had settled in the valley of Mecca because of the inexhaustible spring of water existing there. There are others who hold that when Ibrahim left his wife and son in the valley, the tribe of Jurhum was already there.

² For details see *Sirat Ibn Hisham* and other works on the genealogy of Arabs.

Qusayy b. Kilab

Qusayy b. Kilab was born in the direct line of Fihir but the hegemony of Mecca had, by that time, passed on from Jurhum's clansmen to the hands of the Khuza'ites. Qusayy b. Kilab recovered the administration of the K'aba and the town through his organising capacity and superior qualities of head and heart. The Quraish strengthened the hands of Qusayy b. Kilab in dislodging the Khuza'ites from the position of leadership usurped by them. Qusayy was now master of the town, loved and respected by all. He held the keys of the K'aba and the rights to water the pilgrims from the well of Zamzam, feed the pilgrims,¹ preside at assemblies and hand out war banners. In his hands lay all the dignities of Mecca and nobody entered the K'aba until he opened it for him. Such was his authority in Mecca during his lifetime that no affair of the Quraish was decided but by him, and his decisions were followed like a religious law which could not be infringed.

After the death of Qusayy his sons assumed his authority but 'Abdu Munaf among them was more illustrious. His eldest son, Hashim b. 'Abdu Munaf conducted the feeding and watering of the pilgrims, and, after his death, the authority passed on to 'Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). His people held him in the highest esteem and such was the popularity gained by him, so they say, as was never enjoyed by anybody among his ancestors.²

Bani Hashim

The progeny of Hashim, who now filled the stage and assumed a

¹ A general feast, known as *Rifadah*, was held every year, to which all the pilgrims, deemed to be the guest of Rahman, were invited. The Quraysh contributed a specified sum for it (Al-Khudri, p. 36).

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I (The sons of 'Adnan)

commanding position among the Quraish, was like a stream of light in the darkness of Arabia. The sketches of Bani Hashim preserved by the historians and genealogists, although fewer in number, eloquently speak of the nobility of their character and moderation of their disposition, the reverence they paid to the House of God, their sovereign contempt for things unjust and unfair, their devotion to fairplay and justice, their willingness to help the poor and the oppressed, their magnanimity of heart, their valour and horsemanship, in short, of every virtue admired by the Arabs of the pagan past. Bani Hashim, however, shared the faith of their contemporaries which had beclouded the light of their soul; but despite this failing, they had to have all this goodness as the forefathers of the great Prophet who was to inherit their ennobling qualities and to illustrate them by his own shining example for the guidance of the entire human race.

Meccan Paganism

The Quraish continued to glorify the Lord of the worlds, from whom all blessings flow, like their forefathers Ibrahim and Isma'il until 'Amr b. Luhayy became the chief of Khuza'ites. He was the first to deviate from the religion of Isma'il; he set up idols in Mecca and bade the people to worship and venerate them, he instituted the custom of *sa'iba*¹ which were to be held in reverence. 'Amr b. Luhayy also modified the divine laws of the permissible and impermissible. It is related that once 'Amr b. Luhayy went from Mecca to Syria on some business where he found the people worshipping idols. He was so impressed by the ways of the idol worshippers that he obtained a few idols from them, brought them back to Mecca and asked the people there to pay divine honours to them.²

¹ Bulls dedicated to the idols and not used for any other purpose.

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 76-77. It is related that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) once said: "I saw 'Amr b. Luhayy dragging his intestines in the Hell as he was the first to institute the custom of dedicating beast to the idols as Sa'iba." (Bukhari, Muslim,

It might have been that on his way to Syria ‘Amr b. Luhayy happened to pass through Betra which was variously known to ancient historians and geographers as Petraea and Petra. It was the key city on the caravan route between Saba and the Mediterranean, located on an arid plateau three thousand feet high, to the south of what is today called Transjordan, as mentioned by the Greek and Roman historians. The city was founded by the Nabataeans, ethnically an Arab tribe, in the early part of the sixth century b. C. These people carried their merchandise to Egypt, Syria, the valley of the Euphrates and Rome. Most likely, they took the way to the valley of the Euphrates through the Hijaz. The Nabataeans were an idolatrous people who made their deities out of graven stones. Some historians hold the view that al-Lat, the famous deity of the Northern Hijaz during the pre-Islamic period, had been originally imported from Petra and was assigned an honoured place among the local gods and goddess.¹

The above view finds a confirmation in *The History of Syria* by Philip K. Hitti who writes about the religion of Nabataean kingdoms:

At the head of the pantheon stood Dushara (dhu-al-Shara, Dusara), a sun deity worshipped under the form of an obelisk or an unknown four-cornered black stone.... Associated with Dushara was Allat, chief goddess of Arabia. Other Nabataean goddesses cited in the inscriptions were Manat and al-‘Uzza, of Koranic fame. Hubal also figures in the inscriptions.²

Ahmad). Another tradition related by Muhammad b. Is’haq says: “He was the first to change the religion of Ismail, to set up idols and to institute the custom of *Sa’iba*.”

¹ The author happened to visit Petra in 14th August, 1973, as a member of the delegation of Rabita ‘Alam-I-Islami, where he saw a large number of idols hewn in the mountains. The details can be seen in another work of the author *Darya’i Kabul Se darya’i Yaruk Tak*.

² Philip K. Hitti, *The History of Syria*, London, 1951, p. 384-5.

It is noteworthy that the above description relates to a period when idolatry had, in different forms and shapes, engulfed Arabia and the countries around it. Jesus Christ and his disciples had not yet appeared on the scene, later on labouring to restrain its unbridled expansion. Judaism had already proved its incompetence to the task, since, being essentially a racial religion, it allowed none save the children of Bani Israel to join his faith to the creed of monotheism preached by it.

Another writer, De Lacy O'Leary, tracing the influences responsible for the introduction of idol worship in the Arabian peninsula, sums up his findings in the *Arabia Before Muhammad*,

It seems fairly safe therefore to understand that the use of images was an instance of Syro-Hellenistic culture which had come down the trade-route; it was a recent introduction in Mecca in the time of the Prophet and was probably unknown to the Arab community at large.¹

Worshipping idols was thus the popular creed of the people in the valley of the Euphrates and the lands to the east of Arabia. As the Arabians were bound, since times immemorial, by the ties of commerce with these countries, it is not unlikely that their cultural influence was responsible for grafting idol-worship within the Arabian Peninsula. In his history of Ancient Iraq Georges Roux says that during the third century B. C. and long thereafter idol-worship was very popular in Mesopotamia.¹ Its every city, old or new, gave shelter to several foreign gods besides the local deities.²

¹ De Lacy O'Leary, p. 197.

¹ George Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, Suffolk, 1972, pp. 383-84

² Ibid., pp. 383-84

There are also reports which suggest that idol worship gradually came into vogue among the Quraish. In olden times, as some historians relate, when anybody went out on a long journey from Mecca he took a few stones from the enclosures of the sanctuary as a mark of grace with him. In due course, they started venerating the monoliths they admired most. The subsequent generations, not knowing the reason for holding such monoliths in esteem, started worshipping them like other pagan people of the surrounding countries.³ The Quraish, however, remained attached to some of the older traditions like paying deference to the holy sanctuary, its circumambulation, Hajj⁴ and 'Umra.⁵ The gradual evolution of different religions showing substitution of means for the ends and the slow progression from suppositions to conclusions lend support to the view put forth by the historians about the beginning of idol worship among the Quraish. The esteem and reverence in which even certain misguided Muslim sects come to hold the portraits and sepulchres of the saints and the way they sluggishly adopt this course possesses an incriminating evidence in support of the gradual evolution of idol worship. That is why the Islamic Shari'a completely stalls all those tracks and alleys which lead to the undue veneration of personages, places and relics for they ultimately lead to ascribing partners to God.¹

³ In order to know the names of the earliest deities of Arabia and how they came to worship graven images see *Al-Asnam* by Kaabi, vol. II and the *Bulugh al-Arab fi Ma'rafate Ahwal-il-'Arab* by Syed Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi.

⁴ The pilgrimage to Mecca performed in the month of Zul Hijja, the twelfth month of the Islamic year.

⁵ The lesser pilgrimage to the holy sanctuary performed at any time.

¹ The Shari'a as well as authentic tradition of the Prophet contain innumerable injunctions showing disapproval of pagan superstitions savouring of *shirk* or plurality deities. Some of the well-known Traditions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on the subject say: "Do not make my grave a place of mirth and festivity or hold fairs over it." "Only with the intention of paying a visit to the three Mosques one is permitted to make a journey." "Never pay compliments to me in the way Christians extol Jesus, son of Mary." There are many more similar Traditions prohibiting *shirk*. And, the same is the reason forbidding the making of portraits of living things.

In the days of yore, many a people had taken to idol worship through venerating the portraits or the images of their saints. Ibn Kathir writes, on the authority of Muhammad b. Qays, that there were a large number of persons pious and pure in spirit between the period from Adam to Noah

THE ELEPHANTS

It was during this period that a significant event, unparalleled in the history of Arabia, came to pass which portended something of vital importance likely to take place in the near future. It augured well for the Arabs, in general, and predicted a unique honour for the K'aba, never attained by any place of worship anywhere in the world. The incident afforded hope for expecting a great future for the K'aba—a future on which depended the destiny of religions or rather the entire humanity since it was soon to unfold itself in the shape of an eternal message of righteousness and peace.

An Implicit Belief of the Quraish

The Quraish had always held the belief that the *Bait-ullah* or the House of God had a special place of honour in the eyes of the Lord Who was Himself its protector and defender. The trust placed by the Quraish in the inviolability of the K'aba is amply borne out by the conversation between Abraha and 'Abdul Muttalib. It so happened that Abraha seized two hundred camels belonging to 'Abdul Muttalib, who then called upon him and sought permission to see Abraha. Abraha treated 'Abdul Muttalib with the greatest respect and got off his throne and made him sit by his side. Asked to tell the purpose of his visit, 'Abdul Muttalib replied that he wanted the King to return his two hundred camels which the King had taken.

Abraha, taken by surprise, asked 'Abdul Muttalib, "Do you wish to talk about your two hundred camels taken by me, but you say

who had a large number of followers. After these men of God had departed from the world their followers had the idea of making their portraits by which they thought would keep their memory fresh and help them in concentration during prayers. Those who came after this generation were misled by the devil in thinking that their forefathers paid divine honours to these images which helped to bring rains to them. Thus, they gradually fell into idol worship.

nothing about the House on which depend your religion and the religion of your forefathers, which I have come to destroy?" 'Abdul Muttalib boldly replied, "I am the owner of the camels and the House has an Owner Who will Himself defend it." Abraha said again, "How can it be saved from me?" "This is a matter between you and Him," replied 'Abdul Muttalib.² Who could dare to do harm or cast a blighting glance at the House of God? Its protection was, in truth, the responsibility of God.

The episode, briefly, was that Abraha al-Ashram, who was the viceroy of Negus, the King of Abyssinia, in Yemen built an imposing cathedral in San'a and gave it the name of al-Qullays. He intended to divert the Arab's pilgrimage to this cathedral. Being a Christian Abraha had found it intolerably offensive that the K'aba should remain the great national shrine, attracting crowds of pilgrims from almost every Arabian clan. He desired that his cathedral should replace the K'aba as the most sacred chapel of Arabia.

This was, however, something inglorious for the Arabs. Veneration of the K'aba was a settled disposition with the Arabs: they neither equated any other place of worship with the K'aba nor could they have exchanged it with anything howsoever precious. The perturbation caused by the declared intentions of Abraha set them on fire. Some Kinanite daredevils accepted the challenge and one of them defiled the cathedral by defecating in it. Now, this caused a serious tumult. Abraha was enraged and he swore that he would not take rest until he had destroyed the K'aba.

Abraha took the road to Mecca at the head of a strong force which included a large number of elephants. The Arabs had heard awesome stories about elephants. The news made them all confused and bewildered. Some of the Arab tribes even tried to

² Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 49-50.

obstruct the progress of Abraha's army, but they soon realised that it was beyond their power to measure swords with him. Now, hoping against hope, they left the matter to God putting their trust in Him to save the sacred sanctuary.¹

The Quraish took to the hills and craggy gorges in order to save themselves from the excesses of Abraha's soldiers. 'Abdul Muttalib and a few other persons belonging to the Quraish took hold of the door of the K'aba, praying and imploring God to help them against Abraha. On the other side, Abraha drew up his troops to enter the town and got his elephant Mahmud ready for attack. On his way to the city, the elephant knelt down and did not get up in spite of a severe beating. But when they made it face Yemen, it got up immediately and started off. God then sent upon them flocks of birds, each carrying stones in its claws. Everyone who was hit by these stones died. The Abyssinians thereupon withdrew in fright by the way they had come, continually being hit by the stones and falling dead in their way. Abraha, too, was badly smitten, and when his soldiers tried to take him back, his limbs fell one by one, until he met a miserable end on reaching San'a.¹ The incident finds a reference in the Qur'an also:

"Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the owners of the elephant?"

*Did He not bring their stratagem to naught,
And send against them swarms of flying creatures,*

¹ It is just possible that Abraha might have an objective deeper than the avowed purpose of avenging upon the K'aba a sacrilege committed by an individual. He might have intended to gain control over Mecca so that he might be able to strengthen Christianity in Arabia by opening the road on which depended the contact of Yemen with Syria. The step taken by Abraha was beneficial both for Byzantium and Abyssinia, for both were Christian kingdoms. Whatever might have been the reason, the objective of Abraha could not have been achieved without removing the national temple of the Arabs, which was destined to become the centre of the last Prophethood. And, therefore, God had willed it otherwise. It is also possible that the Byzantines might have urged Abraha to conquer Mecca since this was the only way to weaken the influence of the Sasanids who were the only power the Byzantines had then to face in Arabia.

¹ Ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, pp. 43-57

*Which pelted them with stones of baked clay,
And made them like green crops devoured (by cattle)” (Qur’an
105:1-5).*

Repercussions of Abraha’s Failure

When God turned back the Abyssinians from Mecca, crushed and humbled, and inflicted His punishment upon them, the Arabs, naturally, looked up to the Quraish in great respect. They said: “Verily, these are the people of God: God defeated their enemy—and they did not have even to fight the assailants.” The esteem of the people for the K’aba naturally increased, strengthening their conviction in its sanctity.²

It was undoubtedly a miracle; a sign of the advent of a Prophet who was to cleanse the K’aba of its contamination of idols. It was an indication that the honour of the K’aba was to rise with the final dispensation to be brought by him. One could say that the incident foretold the advent of the great Prophet.

The Arabians attached much importance, and rightly too, to this great event. They instituted a new calendar from the date of its occurrence. Accordingly, we find in their writings such references as that a certain event took place in the year of Elephant or that such and such persons were born in that year or that a certain incident came to pass so many years after the Year of Elephant. This year of miracle was 570 A. D.

² Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 57.

MECCA, THE PROPHET'S BIRTH PLACE

The Metropolis

Those not conversant with the conditions in Mecca at the time of the Prophet's birth nor familiar with the social life, history, legends, literature and poetry of Arabia during the preIslamic times picture Mecca in their mind's eye as a hamlet with a few tents of goat's hair scattered hither and thither, surrounded by sheep, horses and camels and half-clad women and children, within a narrow valley flanked by sharp, jagged hill-tops. They view the people as ignoble and beggarly, passing through a stage of cultural and intellectual infancy, having no aesthetic sense, polish and refinement; a people who took stale bread and half-baked mutton and wore clothes made of camel's hair.

Such a poor and miserable picturisation of Mecca is inconsistent with the unmistakable landscape of the city emerging from historical records, collections of pre-Islamic poetry, habits and customs, norms and traditions of the Arabians. The people of Mecca had already been drawn into the stream of urban culture from the earlier rural, nomadic existence.

To tell the truth, such a vile and mean view of Mecca is not in keeping with the Quranic description of the city which gives it the name of 'the Mother of towns'.

"And thus we have inspired in thee a Lecture in Arabic, that thou mayest warn the mother-town and those around it, and mayest warn of a day of assembling whereof there is no doubt. A host will be in the Garden and a host of them in the Flame". (Qur'an 42:7)

At another place Mecca is designated as the 'land made safe'.

*"By the fig and the olive, by Mount Sinai, and by this land made safe."
(Qur'an 95:1-3)*

And, the Qur'an also calls it a city.

*"Nay I swear by this city (Makkah).
"And thou art an inhabitant of this City."
(Qur'an 90:1-2)*

Mecca had, as a matter of fact, already passed from nomadic balljarism to the stage of urban civilisation by the middle of the fifth century. The city was ruled by a confederacy based on mutual cooperation, unity of purpose and a general consensus on the division of administrative and civil functions between self governing clans, and this system had already been brought into existence by Qusayy b. Kilab. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) being fifth in the line of succession¹ to Qusayy b. Tiilah, the latter can be placed in the middle of the fifth century.

Mecca, thinly populated in the beginning, was located between the two hills called Jabl Abu Qubays (adjacent to Mount Safa) and Jabl Ahmar, known as 'Araf during the preislamic days, opposite the valley of Quaqil'an. The population of the town increased gradually owing partly to the reverence paid to the K'aba and the regardful position of its priests and attendants, and partly because of the peace prevailing in the vicinity of the sanctuary. The tents and shacks had given place to houses made of mud and stones and the habitation had spread over the hillocks and low-lying valleys around the K'aba. At the outset the people living in Mecca abstained from constructing even their housetops in a rectangular shape like the K'aba since they considered it to be a sign of disrespect to the House of God, but gradually the ideas changed; still, they kept the height of their houses lower than that of the K'aba. As related by certain persons, the houses were initially made in a circular shape as a mark of respect to the K'aba. The first rectangular house, reported to have been built by Hamlal b. H.

¹ *Akhbar Makkah* by 'Abi al-Walid al-Azraqi (d. 223. A.H.) has given all the necessary details about the matter.

Zuhair, was looked with disfavour by the Quraish.

The chiefs and other well-to-do the Quraish usually built their houses of stones and had many rooms in them, with two doors on the opposite sides, so that the womenfolk did not feel inconvenience in the presence of guests.

Reconstruction of Mecca

Qusayy b. Kilab had played a leading role in the reconstruction and expansion of Mecca. The Quraish who had been dispersed over a wide area, were brought together by him in the valley of Mecca. He allocated areas for settlement of different families and encouraged them to construct their houses in the specified localities. The successors of Qusayy continued to consolidate the living quarters and to allocate spare lands to new families coming into Mecca. The process continued peacefully for a long time with the result that the habitations of the Quraish and their confederate clans grew up making Mecca a flourishing city.

The City State

Qusayy b. Kilab and his family had assumed a commanding position over the city and its inhabitants. They were the janitors of the K'aba, had the privilege of Saqayah¹ or watering the pilgrims and arranging the annual feast, presided over the meetings of the House of Assembly (Dar-al-Nadwa) and handed out war banners.

Qusayy b. Kilab had built the House of Assembly close to the K'aba with one of its doors leading to the sanctuary. It was used both as a living quarter by Qusayy and the rendezvous for discussing all matters of common weal by the Quraish. No man or woman got married, no discussion on any important matter was held, no declaration of war was made and no sheet of cloth was

¹ Water supplied to the pilgrim was stored in tanks especially constructed for the purpose and the water was sweetened by mixing dates and raisins.

cast on the head¹ of any girl reaching marriageable age except in this house. Qusayy's authority during his life and after his death was deemed sacrosanct like religious injunctions which could not be violated by anybody. The meetings of the House of Assembly could be attended only by the Quraish and their confederate tribesmen, that is, those belonging to Hashim, Umayya, Makhzum, Jomah, Sahm, Taym, 'Adiy, Asad, Naufal and Zuhra, whatever be their age, while people of other tribes not below the age of forty years were allowed to participate in its meetings.

After the death of Qusayy, the offices held by him were divided between different families. Bam Hashim were given the right of watering the pilgrims; the standard of Quraish called 'Aqab (Lit. Eagle) went to Banl Umayya; Bani Naufal were allocated Rifada²; Bam 'Abdul-Dar were assigned priesthood, wardenship of the K'aba and the standard of war; and Banl Asad held the charge of the House of Assembly. These families of the Quraish used to entrust these responsibilities to the notable persons belonging to their families. Thus, Abu Bakr, who came from Banl Taym, was responsible for realising bloodmoney, fines and gratuity; Khalid of Banl Makhzum held charge of the apparatus of war kept in a tent during the peace-time and on the horse back during battles; 'Umar b. al-Khattab was sent as the envoy of Quraish to other tribes with whom they intended to measure swords or where a tribe bragging of its superiority wanted the issue to be decided by a duel; Safwan b. IJmayys of Bani Jomcih played at the dice³ which was deemed essential before undertaking any important task; and, Harith b. Qays was liable to perform all administrative business besides being the custodian of offerings to the idols kept in the K'aba. The duties allocated to these persons were hereditary offices held earlier by their forefathers.

¹ A large piece of cloth with an opening cut through it, in which the girl could put through her head, was placed over her head to signify her betrothal

² A tax paid by the Quraysh from their property at the tie of Hajj for providing food to pilgrim Al-Hadrai, p. 36.

³ Dices marked 'Yes' and 'No' on either side were thrown to decide whether any important task was to be undertaken or not. It was known as Aysar-o-Azlam.

Commercial Operations

The Quraish of Mecca used to fit out two commercial caravans, one to Syria during the summer and the other to Yemen during the winter season. The four months of Haj, that is, Rajab, Dhl Q'ada, Dhil Hijj and Muharram, were deemed sacred when it was not lawful to engage in hostilities. During these months the precincts of the holy temple and the open place besides it were utilised as a trade centre to which people from distant places came for transacting business. All the necessities required by the Arabs were easily available in this market of Mecca. The stores for the sale of various commodities, located in different lanes and byways, mentioned by the historians, tend to show the economic and cultural growth of Mecca. The vendors of attars had their stall\$ in a separate bylane and so were the shops of fruit-sellers, barbers, grocers, fresh dates and other wares and trades located in different alleys. A number of these markets were spacious enough, as, for example, the market set apart for foodgrailts was well-stocked with wheat, ghee (clarified butter), honey and similar other commodities. All these articles were brought by trading caravans. To cite an instance, wheat was brought to Mecca from Yamama.¹ Similarly cloth and shoe stores had separate quarters allocated to them in the market.

Mecca had also a few meeting places where carefree youngmen used to come together for diversion and pastime. Those who were prosperous and accustomed to live high, spent the winter in Mecca and the summer in Ta'if. There were even some smart youngmen known for their costly and trim dresses costing several hundred dirhams.

Mecca was the centre of a lucrative trade transacting business on a large scale. Its merchants convoyed caravans to different countries in Asia and Africa and imported almost everything of necessity and

¹ When Thumama b. Athal (the Chief of Banu Hanifa) embraced Islam, he put a ban on the export of wheat to Mecca. This was found so irk-some by the Quraysh that they had to make a request to the Prophet, on whose intervention, Thumama lifted the ban.

costly wares marketable in Arabia. They usually brought resin, ivory, gold and ebony from Africa; hide, incense frankincense, spices, sandal-wood and saffron from Yemen; different oils and foodgrains, armour, silk and wines from Egypt and Syria; cloth from Iraq; and gold, tin, precious stones and ivory from India. The wealthy merchants of Mecca sometimes presented the products of their city, of which the most valued were leather products, to the kings and nobles of other countries. When the Quraish sent 'Abdullah b. Abu Rabi'a and 'Amr b. al-'As to Abyssinia to bring back the Muslim fugitives, they sent with them leather goods of Mecca as gifts to Negus and his generals.

Women also took part in commercial undertakings and fitted out their own caravans bound for Syria and other countries. Khadija bint Khuwaylid and Hanzaliya, mother of Abu Jahl, were two merchant women of dignity and wealth. The following verse of the Qur'an attests the freedom of women to ply a trade.

"Unto men a fortune from that which they have earned, and unto women a fortune from that which they have earned." (Qur'an 4:32).

Like other advanced nations of the then world, the commercially minded citizens of Mecca had based their economy on commerce for which they sent out caravans in different directions, organised stock markets and created favourable conditions in the home market for the visiting tourists and traders. This helped to increase fame and dignity of Mecca as a religious centre and contributed in no mean measure to the prosperity of the city. Everything required by the people of Mecca, whether a necessity or a luxury, reached their hands because of the city's commercial importance. This fact finds a reference in these verses of the Qur'an:

*"3. So let them worship the Lord of this House; "4. Who hath fed them against hunger;
"5. And hath made them safe from fear." (Qur'an 106:3-5)*

Economic Conditions, Weights and Measures

Mecca was thus the chief centre of business in Arabia and its citizens were prosperous and wealthy. The caravan of the Quraish, involved in the battle of Badr while returning from Syria, consisted of a thousand camels and carried merchandise worth 50,000 dinars.¹

Both Byzantine and Sasanian currencies, known as dirham and dinar, were in general use in Mecca and other parts of the Peninsula. Dirham was of two kinds: one of it was an Iranian coin known to the Arabs bagliyah and sauda'-I-damiyah, and the other was a Byzantine coin (Greek-drachme) which was called tabriyah and bazantiniyah. These were silver coins and therefore instead of using them as units of coinage, the Arabs reckoned their values according to their weights. The standard weight of dirham, according to the doctors of Islamic shart'ah, is equal to fifty-five grains of barley and ten dirhams are equivalent in weight to seven mithqals of gold. One mithqal of pure gold is, however, according to Ibn Khaldun, equal to the weight of seventy-two grains of barley. Doctors of law unanimously agree with the weight given by Ibn Khaldun.

The coins in current use during the time of the Prophet were generally silver coins. 'Ate' states that the coins in general use during the period were not gold but silver coins. (Ibn Abi Shai'ba, Vol. 3, p. 222)

Dinar was a gold coin familiar to the Arabs as the Roman (Byzantine) coin in circulation in Syria and Hijaz during the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period. It was minted in Byzantium with the image and name of the Emperor impressed on it as stated by Ibn 'Abd-ul-Bar in the Al-Tamhid. Old Arabic manuscripts mention the latin denarius aureus as the Byzantine coin (synonymous with the post-Constantine solidus) which is stated to

¹ Strabo once saw an Arabia caravan arriving at Petra and compared it with an army. (*Arabia before Muhammad*, p. 185).

be the name of a coin still a unit of currency in Yugoslavia. New Testament, too, mentions denarius at several places. Dinar was considered to have the average weight of one mithqal, which, as stated above, was equivalent to seventy-two grains of barley. It is generally believed that the weight standard of the dinar was maintained from the pre-Islamic days down to the 4th century of the Hijra. Da'iratul Ma'arif Islamiyah says that the Byzantine denarius weighed 425 grams and hence, according to the Orientalist Zambawar, the mithqal of Mecca was also of 425 grams.¹ The ratio of weight between dirham and dinar was 7:10 and the former weighed seven-tenth of a mithqal.

The par value of the dinar, deduced from the hadith, fiqh² and historical literature, was equivalent to ten dirhams. 'Amr b. Shuyeb, as quoted in the Sunan Abu Dawud, relates: "The blood-money during the time of the Prophet was 800 dinars or 8,000 dirhams, which was followed by the companions of the Prophet, until the entire Muslim community unanimously agreed to retain it." The authentic ahadith fix the nisab or the amount of property upon which zakat is due, in terms of dirham, at 20 dinars. This rule upheld by a consensus of the doctors of law goes to show that during the earlier period of Islamic era and even before it, a dinar was deemed to have a par value of ten dirhams or other coins equivalent to them.

Imam Malik says in the Muwatta that 'the accepted rule, without any difference of opinion, is that zakat³ is due on 20 dinars or 200 dirhams'.⁴

The weights and measures in general use in those days were S'a, mudd, ratal, auqiyah and mithqal to which a few more were added

¹ Vol. IX, p. 270, art. Dinar

² Dogmatic theology or the science of law covering devotional rituals, private conduct and dealing as well as civil and criminal law of Islam.

³ Lit. "Purification", hence a specified portion of property one is obliged to give more either privately or to the state as Alms, for sanctification of the remainder.

⁴ *Bulugh-ul-Adab fi a'rafata Ahwal-ul-'Arab* by Alusi, *Altarbi ud-Dariyah* by Abdul Ha'I Al-Katani, *Fiqh-uz-Zakat* by Yusuf al-Qurawi and *Tafsir Majidi* by Abdul Amjid Daryabadi.

latter on. The Arabs also possessed knowledge of arithmetic, for, it is evident, that the Qur'an had relied on their ability to compute the shares of the legatees in promulgating the Islamic law of inheritance.

Prosperous Families of Quraish

Bani Umayya and Banl Makhzum were the two prominent families of the Quraish favoured by the stroke of luck. Walid b. al-Mughira, 'Abdul 'Uzza (Abu Lahab), Abu Uhaylla b. Sa'eed b. al-'As b. Umayya (who had a share of 30,000 di,nars in the caravan of Abu Sufyan) and 'Abd b. Abl Rabi'a al. Makhzum had made good fortunes. 'Ahdullah b. Jad'an of Banl Taym was also one of the wealthiest persons of Mecca who used to drink water in a cup of gold and maintained a public kitchen for providing food to every poor and beggar. 'Abbes. 'Abdul Muttalib was another man abounding in riches who spent lavishly on the indigent and the needy and lent money at interest in Mecca. During his farewell Pilgrimage when the Apostle abolished usurious transactions, he declared: "The first usury I abolish today is that of 'Abbes b. 'Abdul Muttalib".

Mecca had also men rolling in riches whose well-furnished drawing rooms were the rendezvous of the elite of the Quash who rejoiced in the pleasures of wine, love and romance.

The chiefs of the Quraish usually had their sittings in front of the K'aha in which prominent poets of pre-Islamic days, such as, Labid, recited their poems. It was here that 'Abdul Muttalib used to have his gatherings and, as they say, his sons dared not take their seats around him until their father had arrived.

Culture and Arts

Industrial arts and crafts were looked down Quraish; they

considered it beneath their dignity to have their hands in a handiwork. Manual occupations were regarded as occupation meant exclusively for the slaves or non-Arabs. Yet, notwithstanding this proclivity of the Quraish, certain crafts were a dire necessity and were practiced by some of them. Khabhab b. al-Aratt is reported to have been engaged in manufacturing swords. Constructional activities were also indispensable but Iranian and Byzantine workmen were employed to do the job for the Quraish.

A few men in Mecca knew the art of reading and writing but the Arabs, as whole, were ignorant of the way by which learning is imparted. The Qur'an also calls them Ummi¹ or an unlettered people: "He it is Who hath sent among the unlettered ones messenger of their own."²

The people of Mecca were however, not ignorant of the arts of civilisation: their refined taste, polish and culture excelled them in the whole of Arabia in the same was as the townsmen of any metropolis occupy a distinctive place in their country.

The language spoken at Mecca was regard as a model of unapproachable excellence: the Meccan dialect set the standard which the desert Bedouins as well as the Arabs of outlying areas strived to imitate. By virtue of their elegant expression and eloquence, the inhabitants of Mecca were considered to possess the finest tongue, uncorrupted by the grossness of the languages of non-Arabs. In their physical features, shapeliness and good looks, the people of Mecca were considered to be the best representatives of the Arabian race. They were also endowed with the virtues of courage and magnanimity of heart, acclaimed by the Arabs as Al-Futuh and al-Murawwah, which were the two oft-repeated

¹ Lit. "The Unlettered", also a title of the Prophet. For a detailed discussion of the subject see article 'Was Muhammad Literate?' by Mohaiddun Ahmad in the *Islam and the Modern Age*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (May 1977).

² Baladuri gives the name of 17 individuals who alone knew how to read and wrote in Mecca. (*Futuh al-Buldan, Leydan*, pp. 471-2).

themes of Arabian poetry. These traits of their character admirably describe their recklessness which savoured truth of a devil and a saint.

The matters that attracted their attention most were genealogy, legends of Arabia, poetry, astrology and planetary mansions, ominous flight of the birds and a little of medication. As expert horsemen, they possessed an intimate knowledge of the horse and preserved the memory of the purest breed; and as dwellers of the desert they were well-versed in the delicate art of physiognomy. Their therapy based partly on their own experience and partly on the traditional methods handed down to them from their forefathers, consisted of branding, phlebotomy, removal of diseased limbs and use of certain herbs.

Military Prowess

The Quraish were by nature or nurture, a peace-loving people, amiable in disposition; for, unlike all other peoples inside and outside the Peninsula, their prosperity depended on the development of free trade, continual movement of caravans, improvement of marketing facilities in their own city and maintenance of conditions peaceful enough to encourage merchants and pilgrims to bend their steps to Mecca. They were sufficiently farsighted to recognise that their merchantile business was their life: trade was the source of their livelihood as well as the means to increase their prestige as servants of the sanctuary. The Qur'an has also referred to the fact in the Surah Quraish: "So let them worship the Lord of this House, who hath fed them against hunger hath made safe from fear." (Qur'an 106:3-5) In other words, they were inclined to avoid a scramble unless their tribal or religious honour was in peril. They were thus committed to the principle of peaceful coexistence; nevertheless, they possessed considerable military prowess. Their courage and intrepidity was as axiomatic throughout Arabia as was their skill in horsemanship. "Al-Ghadr al-Mudriyah" or anger of the Mudar, which can be

described as a tormenting thirst quenched by nothing save blood, was a well known adage of Arabic language frequently used by the poets and orators of pre-Islamic Arabia.

The military prowess of Quraish was not restricted to their own tribal reserves alone. They utilised the services of ahabish or the desert Arabs living around Mecca, some of which traced their descent to Kinana and Khuzayma b. Mudrika the distant relation of Quraish. The Khuza'a were also confederates of the Quraish. In addition, Mecca had always had slaves in considerable numbers who were ever willing to fight for their masters. They could thus draft, at any time, several thousand warriors under their banner. The strongest force numbering 10,000 combatants, ever mustered in the pre-Islamic era, was enlisted by the Quraish in the battle of Ahzab.

Mecca, the heart of Arabia

By virtue of it's being the seat of the national shrine and the most flourishing commercial center whose inhabitants were culturally and intellectually in Arabia. It was considered a rival of Sana'a in Yemen, but with the Abyssinians and Iranians gaining control over Sana'a, one after another, and the decline of the earlier glamour of Hiram and Ghassan, Mecca had attained a place of undisputed supremacy in Arabia.

The Moral Life

A moral ideal was what the Meccans lacked most of all, or one can say, except for the binding force of some stale customs and traditional sentiments of Arab chivalry, they had no code of ethics to guide their conduct. Gambling was a favourite pastime in which they took pride, unrestrained drunkenness sent them into rapturous delight and immoderate dissipation satisfied their perverted sense of honour., Their gatherings were the scenes of

drinking bouts and wanton debauchery. Without any idea of sin or crime, they never took any aversion to wickedness, iniquity, callousness and brigandage.

The moral atmosphere of Arabia in general, and of Mecca in particular, was faithfully depicted by J'afar b. Abu Talib, a prominent member of the Quraish, in the court of Negus. when he said to him; "O King we were an unenlightened people plunged in ignorance: we worshipped idols, we ate dead animals, and we committed abominations; we broke natural ties, we ill-treated our neighbors and our strong devoured the weak."¹

Religious Life

The religious practices and beliefs of the Arabs were, beyond doubt, even more despicable, particularly, by reason of the influence they exerted on the social and moral life of the people. Having lost all but little touch with the salubrious teachings of the prophets of old, they had been completely submerged in the crude and materialistic form of fetishism like that prevailing in the countries surrounding them. So fond had they become of idol Worship that no less than three hundred and sixty deities adorned, or defiled, the holy sanctuary. The greatest amongst these gods was Hubal whom Abu Sufyan had extolled at the battle of Uhad when he had cried out: "Glory be to Hubal". The idol occupied a central place in the K'aba, by the side of a well in which the offerings were stored. Sculptured in the shape of a man, it was made of a huge cornelian rock. As its right hand was missing when the Quraish had discovered it, they had replaced it by a hand made of solid gold. Two idols had been placed in front of the K'aba, one was called Isaf and the other as Na'ila; the former had been installed close to the K'aba and the latter by the place of Zamzam. After sometime the Quraish had shifted the first one near the other, where they offered up sacrifices besides them. On the mounts of

¹ *Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 336*

Safa and Marwah, there were two more idols called Nahlk Mujawid al-Rih and Mut'im at-Tayr.

Every household in Mecca had an idol which was worshipped by the inmates of the house. Al-'Uzza had been installed near 'Arafat within a temple constructed for it. Quraish venerated al-'Uzza as the chief or the noblest of all deities. The Arabs used to cast lots with the help of divining arrows placed before these idols for taking a decision to commence any affair. There were also other idols, one of which named as al-Khalsa, had been set up in the depression of Mecca's valley. The idol was garlanded, presented an offering of barley and wheat and bathed with milk. The Arabs used to make sacrifices and hang the eggs of ostrich over it. Being a popular deity its replicas were sold by vendors to the villagers and pilgrims visiting Mecca.

The Arabs possessed the virtues of courage, loyalty and generosity, but during the long night of superstition and ignorance, worship of images and idols had stolen into their hearts, perhaps, more firmly than any other nation; and they had wandered far away from the simple faith of their ancestors Ibrahim and Isma'tl which had once taught them the true meaning of religious piety, purity of morals and seemliness of conduct.

So, this was the city of Mecca, The by the middle of the sixth century of Christian era, before the birth of the Prophet, whence we see Islam rising on a horizon shrouded in obscure darkness.

In very truth the Lord has said:

"That thou mayst warn a folk whose fathers were not warned, so they are heedless."(Qur'an 36:6).

FROM BIRTH TO PROPHETHOOD

‘ABDALLAH AND AMINA

‘Abdul Muttalib, Chieftain of the Quraysh, had ten sons who were all worthy and outstanding, but ‘Abdullah was the noblest and most prominent among them.¹ ‘Abdul Muttalib wedded him to Amina, the daughter of Wahb b. ‘Abdu Munaf, who was the leading man of Bani Zuhra. She (Amina) was the most excellent woman among the Quraysh in birth and stature at that time.²

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was born after the death of his father. Before his birth, Amina witnessed many an omen foretelling a great future for her son.³

THE BIRTH OF THE PROPHET

The Prophet was born on Monday, the 12th of Ra’i-ul Awwal⁴ in the year of the Elephant. Certainly, it was the most auspicious day in the history of mankind.

Thus, Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the son of ‘Abdullah, b. ‘Abdul Muttalib, b. Hashim, b. ‘Abdul Munaf, b. Qusayy, b. Kilab, b. Murra, b. Ka’b b. Lu’ayy, b. Ghalib, b. Fihr, b. Malik, b. Al-Nadr, b. Kinana, b. Khusayma, b. Mudrika, b. Ilyas, b. Mudar b. Nizar b. Ma’add, b. ‘Adnan.

The parentage of ‘Adnan is further traced by Arab genealogists to Ismail b. Ibrahim.⁵ After the birth of Muhammad (peace be

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 108

² *Ibid*, p. 110

³ *Ibid*, p. 158

⁴ A noted astronomer, Mahmud Pasha of Egypt, has computed the date of birth as Monday, the 9th of Rabi-ul-Awwal in the year of Elephan which was, according to the Gregorian calendar, the 20th April, 571 A.D.

⁵ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, Pp. 1-2

upon him) Amina sent someone to inform his grandfather. He came, looked at the baby lovingly and took him to the K'aba where he praised⁶ Allah and prayed for the infant. 'Abdul Muttalib then gave him the name Muhammad, which means, "He who is praised." The Arabs were surprised at the unfamiliar name¹ given to the newborn babe by 'Abdul Muttalib.

THE SUCKLING PERIOD

Thuwaybah, a bondwoman of the Prophet's uncle Abu Lahab, suckled him momentarily for a few days while 'Abdul Muttalib continued to look for a wet-nurse to nurture his favorite grandson. It was customary in Mecca to place the suckling babies under the care of a desert tribeswoman, where the child grows up in the free, chivalrous air away from the cramped, contaminating atmosphere of the city, and learns the wholesome ways of the Bedouins. Those were the days when the chaste, unaffected and natural expression of the desert people was considered as the finest model of grace and elegance of the Arabic language. Together with the milk of a Bedouin woman, the babies drank the fluent language that flew across the desert.

The people from the tribe of Bani S'ad were known for the gracefulness of their speech. Halima S'adiya, a member of this tribe, ultimately came to have the precious baby under her wings. This was a year of famine wherein Bani S'ad had been rendered miserable. The tribe came to Mecca to look for children to be suckled, but no woman to whom the Apostle of God was offered, agreed to take the child because none expected a goodly return for nurturing or nursing an infant whose father was already dead. They said, "An orphan! What will his mother and grandfather give in return?" At first, Halima also declined the offer but suddenly she felt a craving for the baby. She had

⁶ *Ibn Hisham*, pp. 159-60

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. I, p. 210, *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 158

also failed to get a charge for her and, therefore, before going back home, she returned and finally took the baby back with her. Halima found before long that her household was blessed with luck, her breast overflowed with milk, the udders of her she-camel were full and everything seemed to bring forth happiness. The women of Halima's tribe now spread the rumor, "Halima, you have certainly got a blessed child." They began to feel envious of her.

Halima weaned the baby until he was two years old, for it is customary upon the foster-children to return to their families at such an age. Besides, the boy was also growing up faster than the other children, and by the time he was two, he was already a well-grown child. Thus, Halima brought the Apostle of God back to Amina but begged her to be allowed to keep the boy for some extended time as he had brought her luck. Amina agreed and allowed Halima to take Muhammad (Peace be upon him) back with her.¹

Some months after his return to Bani S'ad, two angels seized the Apostle of God (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), opened up his chest and extracted a black drop from it. Then they thoroughly cleaned his heart and healed the wound after putting his heart back in its place.²

The Apostle of God (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) looked after the sheep with his foster-brothers in the unfathomable or boundless wilderness of the desert, far away from the pretensions, hypocrisy, pomp and pride of the city, where his thoughts became clear like the desert air. His life was simple like the sand and he learnt to endure the hardships and

¹ The interesting story of the period, as told by Halima, has been preserved by Ibn Hisham. See Vol. 1, pp. 162-166

² The detailed account of the story can be seen in the biographies of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Imam Muslim relates the incident on the authority of Anas b. Malik under the heading 'Ascent of the Prophet' in his *Kitab-ul-Iman*.

dangers of the wildness. And with the people of Bani S'ad, his ears became accustomed to the rhetoric and eloquence of the pure and classical language of the Bedouins. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) often used to tell his companions: "I am the most Arab of you all for I am of Quraysh origin, and I was suckled among Bani S'ad b. Bakr."³

DEATH OF AMINA AND 'ABDUL MUTTALIB.

When the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was six years old, his mother took him to Yathrib to pay a visit to her father. She also wanted to call on the grave of her late husband,¹ but while on her way back to Mecca, she died at a place called Abwa.² The Apostle must have felt lonely and sorrowful at the death of his mother in the middle of his journey. Incidents of such nature had been a common fixture in his life since birth, perhaps as a divine dispensation for his upbringing in a particular way, one which is reminiscent of the great role that he has to play in the future. Finally, the Abyssinian bondwoman, Umm Ayman Barkah, brought him to his grandfather in Mecca. 'Abdul Muttalib loved the Apostle so dearly, making him the apple of his eye and never allowed him to be distant from him. He would make the Apostle sit beside him on his bed in the shade of the Ka'ba and caress him to show his affection.

When the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was eight years of age, 'Abdul Muttalib also passed away.³ The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was now

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, 167

¹ Later on the Prophet used to relate some of the incidents of his journey with his mother. After his migration to Medina, when the Apostle saw house of Bani Najjar, he remarked that his mother had bivouacked at that place and the well there was full of husk. (*Sharh al-Mawahib ul-Ladunniya*, Vol. I, pp. 167-8)

² The place is near Mastura halfway between Mecca and Medina.

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 168-9

left behind, alone and abandoned. He had never seen his father, and would have had no recollection of him, but the death of the adoring grandfather must have been very depressing and inconsolable for him.

ABU TALIB BECOMES THE GUARDIAN

After the death Of ‘Abdul Muttalib, Abu Talib took the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) under his care for he and ‘Abdullah, the Apostle’s father, were brothers by the same mother. Abdul Muttalib had also been insisting upon Abu Talib to take care of the Apostle himself. Accordingly, Abu Talib took the Apostle under his protection and even treated him with more care and affection than his own sons, ‘Ali, J’afar and ‘Aqil.⁴

Once, when the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was nine years old,¹ Abu Talib planned to go on a merchant caravan to Syria. Knowing this, the Apostle approached his uncle, and nestling close to him, insisted on accompanying him in the journey. Abu Talib was moved and agreed to take him to Syria. When the caravan reached Busra in Syria, it broke the journey for a short stay and while there, they met a monk by the name of Buhaira who lived in his cell. He came out against his practice, to welcome the merchants and made a great feast for them. The caravan found favor with Buhaira, so they say, because of something that he had seen while in his cell. When Buhaira saw Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), he saw in him the signs of the apostleship that he had known, and advised Abu Talib, “Return to your home with this youth, and guard him from the Jews; for great dignity awaits your nephew.” Abu Talib immediately took the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) back to Mecca by virtue of Buhaira’s advice.

⁴ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 179

¹ As related by authentic Traditions

DIVINE TUTELAGE

God had made special arrangements for broadening the mind of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and had taken particular care to shut off the faults and failures of the pagan past from him. Since his early youth, the reserved and unassuming young man was known for his gentle disposition and grave purity of life as well as for his candidness, honesty, integrity and a stern sense of duty. His was the straight and narrow path and none could find the slightest fault with him. The fair character and honorable bearing of the Apostle won for him, in the flower of his youth, the title of *Al-Amin*, meaning the Trusty,² from his fellow populace.

Evil were the ways of young men in Mecca, and no misconduct brought anybody into discredit. But God helped His Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) abandon the pleasures of life familiar to everybody in Mecca. Such that, on the contrary, he was rather kind to his kinsmen, alleviated the sufferings of others and spared or minimized expenses to meet their needs. Moreover, he entertained guests, was ever willing to join hands with anybody who had a noble and virtuous task¹ and preferred to earn his livelihood by toiling hard for it even if it meant living a simple life to the point of austerity.

When the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was around fourteen or fifteen years of age, the sacrilegious war, known as the Harb-ul-Fijar, broke out between the Quraysh and the tribe of Qays. The Apostle was present at these encounters and picked up the arrows that the enemy had shot, and gave them back to the Qurayshite fighters. This was his first

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 183

¹ Khaidjah, the Prophet wife, referred to these qualities of her husband when she found him perplexed after the first revelation to him.

experience with military operations.²

Now that the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was coming into his years of discretion, he turned his attention to find a means of livelihood. Like other lads of his age, he took to tending of sheep and goats. It was not deemed a disgraceful occupation in those days, rather, it helped one to be watchful, alert and quick, kind and considerate besides allowing an opportunity to inhale the freedom of Arabian air and the power of sand. More than that, it had been the convention of all the prophets of old which complied with his future prophetic office. The Prophets afterwards used to say: “Verily, there has been no prophet who has not tended the flocks of goats.” On being asked again whether he had also performed the work of a shepherd, the Prophet affirmed. “Yes I did such work.”

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was not completely new to the job for in his childhood days he used to accompany his foster-brothers who tended their flocks and herds. The reports in the *Sahih* show that the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to tend the goats upon the neighbouring hills and valleys for a meager payment from the owners of the flocks.³

MARRIAGE WITH KHADIJA

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) married Khadijah when he was twenty-five years of age. Khadijah,

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, 186

³ The Arabic term used is *Qararit* about which Shibli No'mani writes in *Sirat un Nabi*, Vol. I, that scholars differ about the meaning of word. Suwaib b. Sa'id, the teacher of Ibn Majah, holds that *Qirat* (pl. *Qararit*) being a fraction of *dirham* or *dinar*, the Tradition means that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to tend goats on payment and hence Bukhari included it under the chapters pertaining to wages. The finding of Ibrahim Al-Harbi, on the other hand, is that the word signifies a place near Ujhad and Ibn Jawzi prefers this meaning. 'Oyeni has also given many reasons to support the view and the author of *Nur-in-Nibras* has, after a detailed discussion of the word, upheld the latter view.

daughter of Khuwaylid, was noble and intelligent, wealthy and was respected for the quality and integrity of her heart. A widow whose age was then forty years,¹ her late husband was Abu Hala. She carried on their business and like other merchants of Mecca she used to hire men to carry her merchandise outside the country on a profit-sharing scheme. Khadijah had an experience of the Apostle's truthfulness, trustworthiness and honorable character and had also heard about the strange events that had taken place when the Apostle traded her merchandise in Syria. Although Khadijah had turned down several offers for her hand by some of the eminent chiefs of the Quraysh, she expressed her desire to marry the Apostle. Hamza, an uncle of the Apostle, conveyed the message to him for which he readily agreed. Abu Talib recited the wedding sermon and the Apostle, united in wedlock with Khadija, commenced his marital career. All the offsprings of the Prophet (except Ibrahim who died in infancy) were born to Khadijah.²

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE KA'BA

In his thirty-fifth year, the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) made a difficult decision which provoked the Quraysh and threatened to plunge them into another sacrilegious war. The Quraysh wished to rebuild the Ka'bah and furnish it with roofs, for it was made of loose stones, and its walls were only a little higher than a man's height. So, the walls were demolished and the work of reconstruction was taken up, but when it was time to rebuild the Ka'bah, as far as the position of the Black Stone was concerned, the question arose as to who should place the sacred relic into its place. Every tribe claimed the honor, until they got ready for a fight. The grounds that led to wars of attrition during the early days of paganism in Arabia were nothing or insignificant when compared to the grave issue

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 189-90

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p.190 and other biographies of the Prophet

that was made as the focal point of honor on this occasion.

Banu ‘Abdul Dar brought a bowl full of blood; then they and Banu ‘Adiy pledged themselves to fight unto death by thrusting their hands into the blood. The conflict appeared to be the starting point of a furious struggle which might have swallowed up the whole of Arabia in another of their oft-recurring wars. The dilemma continued for a few days until it was agreed that whosoever would be the first man to enter the gate of the mosque would be made as the umpire of the matter under dispute. And so the first man to enter came, and he was no other than the Apostle of God. “This is Muhammad,” they said as soon as they saw him coming, and further added, “He is trustworthy and we will abide by his decision.”

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked them to bring a cloth, took the Black Stone and put it inside the fabric, then afterwards asked each tribe to take hold of an end of the cloth and then simultaneously raise it to the required height. When the people lifted the stone in said manner, the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) placed it in its position with his own hands, and the building went on above it.¹ The wisdom displayed by the Apostle on this occasion, which saved the Quraysh from measuring the might of their swords with that of the others, strikingly illustrates his sound judgement and also showed sparks of his genius. The sagacity of the Prophet foretold how bloodshed is taken as a divine harbinger of peace. The incident foreshadowed the signs of the Apostle’s prudence, profoundness of his teachings, his thoughtfulness, cool temper and the spirit of his friendliness and altruism; in fact the cardinal virtues of one who was to become the “Mercy for the Worlds”. These were the qualities through which the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) transformed a people, unruly and ferocious, continuously at war among each

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 192-197

other, into a closely-knit fraternity by proving and submitting himself as a Merciful Prophet before them.

HILFUL FUDUL

It was during this period that the Quraysh came to agree upon one of the noblest covenants made, in which the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) played a prominent part. It so happened that a man from Zabid (a town in Yemen) came to sell his merchandise in Mecca. One of the Quraysh chieftains in the person of Al-As b. Wayel purchased the whole of it but paid nothing in return. Because of this, Zabid approached several influential Quraysh leaders but none of them agreed to confront Al-As b. Wayel. Having been turned down by those that he had previously asked for help, Zabid called upon the people of Mecca exhorting every bold and fair-minded young man to come to his rescue. At last, many of them, moved by embarrassment, assembled in the house of ‘Abdallah b. Jad’an who entertained everyone who came to his house. Thereafter, they formed a pact, in the name of Allah, for repression of acts of lawlessness and restoration of justice to the weak and the oppressed within the walls of Mecca. The covenant was called *Hilful Fudul* wherein all its members finally approached Al-As b. Wayel and forced him to return the merchandise of Zabid.¹

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had been one of the prominent movers of the pact and he always made it a point to express his satisfaction over the execution of this agreement. Once he remarked, “I had a hand in making such an arrangement in the house of ‘Abdallah b. Jad’an to which if I were invited again to lend a hand even after the advent of Islam, I would have undoubtedly participated once more.” Through such Hiful Fudul, they had agreed to restore to everyone what is

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 257-59

due of him and to protect the weak from the exploits and manipulations of the oppressors.

A MYSTIFYING UNREST

Muhammad (peace be upon him) was now approaching his fortieth year. He felt a mystifying internal unrest, yet he did not know the rationale behind it. He was himself not aware what the inexplicable confusion meant to him; nor did the idea that God was about to honor him with revelation and prophethood ever cross his mind. This was how the Prophet felt, as has been attested by God in the Qur'an:

“And thus have We inspired in you (Muhammad) a Spirit of Our Command. You knew not what the Scripture was, nor what was Faith. But We have made it a light whereby We guide whom We will of our bondmen. And Lo! You verily guide unto a right path” (Qur'an 42:52).

At another place, the inability of the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to know the reason for his internal unrest has been demonstrated in these words:

“You had no hope that the Scripture would be inspired to you; but it is a mercy from your Lord, so never be a helper to the disbelievers” (Qur'an 28:86).

It pleased the Will of God, All-wise and All-knowing, that His Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) should remain a stranger to the arts of reading and writing. His contemporaries could thus never accuse him of himself editing the divine revelations. This, too, has been subverted by the Qur'an to settle the matter as evidenced by the following verse:

“And you (O Muhammad) was not a reader of any Scripture before it, nor did you write it with your right hand, for then

might those have doubted, who follow falsehood” (Qur’an 29: 48).

That is why the Qur’an calls him an unlettered prophet:

Those who follow the messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they find described in the Torah and the Gospel (which are) with them—He commands for them the good and forbids them from evil” (Qur’an 7:157).

DAWN OF PROPHETHOOD

THE HUMANITY'S MORNING TIDE

By the time the Apostle completed the fortieth year of his life, the world was standing on the brink of an abyss of fire, or in other words, one could say that the entire human race was at the point of committing suicide. It was at this darkest moment in the history of mankind, when the first blush of the incense-breathing morn announced a brightening future for humanity - the opening eyelids of prophethood rang down the curtain on the glooming destiny of the unfortunate, dying world. The settled law of the Merciful God is that when the sable darkness of man's own doing drives him to despair, a star of hope appears again as the parent of faith, hope and cheerfulness so as to wipe away his tears.

The forces of darkness and ignorance, superstition and paganism had thrown their weight around the world and crushed the soul of man under an iron heel. It was but natural that the emptiness of life and the corrupt faith of the people around the Apostle had made him agitated and restless, and he sought a higher aim, a glimmer of guidance from the Lord, Most High. Furthermore, it seemed as if some celestial voice summoned him to the wakeful nights in preparation for the great responsibility about to be thrust upon him. Often, he was seen wandering through the countryside, far away from the bustling city of Mecca, lost in introspection and solitude of his own soul, for this imparted him a sense of peace, tranquility and contentment. He also frequently immersed himself to the barren desert and wild mountains that are laden with numerous caverns but devoid of habitation. And when he passed through them he clearly heard the salutation; 'Peace unto thee, O Apostle of Allah', but when he turned to his right and left and looked behind him, he saw naught but trees and stones.¹

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 234-55., *Sahih Muslim* relates a Tradition of the Prophet which says: 'I still recognize a slab of stone in Mecca which used to salute me before the advent of Prophethood.'

IN THE CAVE OF HIRA

Verily, often the Apostle preferred the solitude of Cave Hira where he remained for as many days as the provision with him required, spending his nights in vigils and prayers, in the manner he thought reminiscent of the way of Ibrahim.¹

It was the 17th Ramadan (6th August, 610 A.D.) of the year following the fortieth year of the Prophet. The Apostle of God was wide-awake and fully conscious when the Angel (Gabriel) came to him and said: "read". The Apostle answered truthfully, "I cannot read." The Prophet relates that the Angel took and pressed him until he was distressed, after which he let him go and said again, "Read." The Prophet replied for the second time, "I cannot read." The Angel again pressed him tightly until he felt squeezed and then letting him go, said, "Read." When the Prophet replied once again, "I cannot read," he took him and pressed tightly a third time in the same manner. He then let the Prophet go and said:²

*"Read (O Mubammad) in the name of thy Lord who createth,
 "Createth man from a clot.
 Read: and thy Lord is the Most Bounteous,
 "Who teacheth by the pen,
 "Teacheth man that which he knew not." (Qur'an 96:1-5)*

BACK TO HOME

Dizzy and frightened by the strange experience which had never occurred to him earlier or having not heard of the same prior incident, the Messenger of God came back with verses, his heart trembling, and went to Khadijah and said: "wrap me up, wrap me up, " for he still felt horrified himself.

Khadijah asked the reason for the Prophet's restlessness and the latter told her what had happened. Khadijah was intelligent and

¹ See the Tradition related by 'Aisha, *Mishkat al-Masabih*, Vol. IV, pp. 1252

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. I, p. 392

prudent and had heard a great deal about the messengers of God, prophethood and angels from her cousin Waraqa b. Naufal (who had embraced Christianity and familiarized the Torah and Gospels). She was herself dissatisfied with the pagan cult of the Meccans like several other enlightened ones who had broken away from the idol worship.

Khadijah was wife of the Prophet. She had spent many years with him as the closest companion and knew him like she knew herself. By that alliance, Khadija became the most reliable & credible testament of the nobility of her husband's character. Worthiness of his moral fiber had convinced her that succor of the Lord would in any case stand by such a man. She knew in her heart of heart that the good grace of God could never allow one so high-minded, truth-loving, trustworthy and upright man such as her husband, to be possessed by a jinn or a devil. And so she assured him with domineering self-confidence: "By no means; I swear to God that He would never embarrass you. Because you consolidate & salvage relationships, you speak the truth, you bear peoples' burdens, you help destitutes, you entertain guests and you relieved the pain and grief suffered for the sake of truth."¹

PREDICTION OF WARAQA B. NAWFAL

Khadija had tried to comfort and encourage her husband on account of what she thought was correct or on the basis of her own knowledge and understanding. But the matter was serious, crucial and imperative. She had no peace of mind until she had consulted someone knowledgeable of the revealed religions, their history and scriptures, as well as the biography of the earlier prophets of God. She wished to know for sure what had befallen her husband.

Khadija knew that Waraqa b. Naufal was the man who could clarify the matter. She took the Apostle to Waraqa and when the Prophet told him what he had seen and heard, Waraqa cried out,

¹ *Mishkat al-Masabih*, Vol. IV, p. 1253

“Verily by Him in whose hand is Waraqa’s soul, lo, thou art the Prophet of this people. There hath come unto thee the greatest Namus, (Archangel Gabriel) who came unto Moses aforetime. A time will come when thou wilt be called a liar, thy people wilt maltreat thee, cast thee out and fight against thee.” The Apostle was surprised to hear Waraqa’s premonitions for his fellow citizens had always received him with courtesy and esteem. They addressed him as the trustworthy and honest. Holding his breath in amazement, he demanded from Waraqa, “What! Will they expel me?” “Yes”, replied Waraqa, “For no man has ever brought anything like what thou hast brought without being opposed and fought by his people, which hath always been so. If I live to see that day, I shall stand by thee.”¹

The Prophet waited, day after day, but no revelation came for a long time. Then, it reached again to the Apostle and so the revelation of the Qur’an began to manifest in quick succession and endured throughout the entire period of twenty-three years.

KHADIJAH ACCEPTS ISLAM

Khadijah, the Apostle’s wife, was the first believer in the new faith. She had the opportunity of being his companion and helper, his consort and supporter. She always stood behind him, consoling and giving him support against all those who denied and scorned him. She tried to relieve his apprehensions and encouraged him by reinforcing her trust in him.

‘ALIH B. ABU TALIB AND ZAYD B. HARITH

‘Ali B. Abi Talib was the next to enter in the fold of Islam. He was then a youth of ten years, and had been brought up under the guardianship of the Prophet since his early childhood. The Apostle had taken the charge of ‘Ali from his uncle Abu Talib, and kept him as a member of his family since the time a grievous famine befell Quraysh.² The third accession to Islam was made with the

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 238; Bukhari, (chapter Commission and the Beginning of the Revelation) on the authority of ‘Aihsa.

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 245

conversion of Zayd b. Haritha¹ (who was a freeman of the Prophet and whom he had adopted as his son).

ABU BAKR ACCEPTS ISLAM

Acceptance of the Prophet's faith by Abu Bakr b. Abi Quhafa, after Zayd, was of no mean significance. This merchant of sociable nature was known for his moderation and prudence, good character and kindness, and enjoyed a still greater reputation for his wide knowledge of the genealogy of the Quraysh and expertise in commerce. He began to preach the truth that he had affirmed himself to all those that he had relied upon including those who are associated with him or those who came to seek his company.²

FLOWER OF QURAYSH FIND CREDENCE

The persuasive businessman began to win over the elite of the Quraysh to place their trust in the mission of the Prophet. Those who accepted Islam at the invitation of Abu Bakr included 'Uthman b. Affan, Zubayr b. Al 'Awwam, "abdu'l Rahman b. Auf, S'ad b. Abi Waqqa and Talha b. 'Ubaydullah. Abubakr brought all of them to the prophet upon whose hands they embraced Islam.³

Slowly, the mission of the Prophet was made known to other respectable citizens of Mecca and some of them who followed after the first eight were:

Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah, Al-Arqam, 'Uthman b. Maz'un, 'Ubaydah b. al-Harith b. Abdul Muttalib, Sa'id B. Zayd, Kahbbab b. Al-Aratt, 'Abdallah b. Mas'ud, 'Ammar b. Yasir, Suhayb b. Sinan and others.

People now began to accept Islam in large number; they came in throngs from different tribes and families until the news spread throughout the city that Muhammad (Peace be upon him) taught

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 247

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 249-59

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 150-51

some sort of a new faith.¹

ON MOUNT SAFA

Three years had elapsed from the time the Apostle had received the first revelation but he had remained a silent preacher. He was now commanded to announce it openly:

“So proclaim that which thou art commanded, and withdraw from the idolaters.” (Qur’an 15: 94)

“And warn thy tribe of near kindred, and lower thy wing (in kindness) unto those believers who follow thee.” (Qur’an 26:214-15). And say: Lo! I, even I, am a plain warner.” (Qur’an 15: 89)

It was an order to show himself to peoples of the world. The Apostle ascended the heights of mount Safa and cried aloud: “Ya Sahabah”. The Arabs were already familiar with the call, which was meant to summon them for facing a surprise attack by the enemy. The alarming call made the whole of the Quraysh come quickly round the Apostle while those who were unable to go themselves, sent others to deputize for them. Looking down at the men who waited with their eyes strained at him, the Messenger of God said to them:

“O sons of ‘Abdul Muttalib! O sons of Fihir: O sons of K’ab! If I tell you that horsemen were advancing to attack you from the other side of this hill, would you believe me?” The Arabs were practical-minded, possessing a keenly logical outlook, which admitted no ifs, or buts. They saw the man whom they had always found, on every occasion, candid, honest and dependable, standing on the summit, having a full view of both the sides of the hill. They had, on the other hand, the rear of the hill concealed from their view. Given their intelligence and understanding, experience with the man addressing them, and the entirety of their own sane

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, p. 262

and sound mind led them to only one conclusion. They unanimously replied, “Oh yes, we would surely believe you.”

A COGENT ARGUMENT

Absolute truthfulness and dependability of the messenger of God constitute the first and the most essential factor for the acceptance of his mission. The question posed by the Prophet was thus meant to obtain a confirmation of these qualities from his audience. This done, he said to them, “Well, I am a warner to you before a severe condemnation overtakes you.” The Prophets of God are endowed with the knowledge of mute realities that are neither perceptible nor acceptable in human parlance. The way the Prophet had tried to explain them the concept and essence of apostleship was the most trenchant and effective method that could have been employed for the purpose. This was certainly the easiest as well as the best method to convey an accurate impact and significance of Prophethood, wherein the allegorical mode of expressing such a complex reality was without parallel in the teachings of any other prophet or founder of religion.

The words of the Apostle so struck the Quraysh that they stood silent and still. Abu Lahab, at last, took courage and exclaimed, “May you perish! Is it for this that you have brought us here?”¹

BEGINNING OF PERSECUTION

The Apostle of God preached Islam openly in the streets of Mecca, yet the Quraysh remained cool and indifferent to him; neither did they turn against him nor did they ever feel that their Religion was at stake. They did not even care to refute the Prophet but when he started talking critically of their gods, they felt offended and decided to oppose him. Muhammad (Peace be upon him) would have been at the mercy from the radicals of the merchant’s republic of Mecca, but Abu Talib, the Prophet’s uncle, continued to treat him kindly and stood up in his defense. And,

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, pp. 455-56, related on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas and cited from the Musnad of Ibn Hanbal. Bukhari and Muslim have also related Traditions with a similar purport from al-Amash.

the Prophet, equally determined to actively propagate his new faith, continued to call the people to Islam. Nothing could stop the Prophet from preaching the commands of his God, in the same way that nothing could also dissuade Abu Talib to withdraw his protection from the nephew he loved more than his sons.

ABU TALIB'S ANXIETY

The Apostle was now the much-talked about problem among the Quraysh. They conferred and consulted one another how to face the danger that the Prophet with his sweet tongue portended before them. At last, the leading men of the Quraysh approached Abu Talib and said to him, "O Abu Talib, you are old and we hold you in high esteem. We had asked you to restrain your nephew but you did nothing. By God, we cannot tolerate any longer that our fathers should be denounced, that we should be labeled ignoramuses and frivolous and our gods insulted. Either you must stop him or we will fight both of you, until one of us perishes."¹

The old leader of Mecca remained deep in thought, distressed at the rift with his people and their hostility but he was not willing to desert his nephew nor give him up to his enemies. He sent for the Apostle and said, "Son of my brother, your people came to me and threatened me with dire consequences if you continue to preach your religion. Spare my life and yours and do not impose on me a burden greater than I can bear." The Apostle thought that his uncle was no longer willing to shield him, that he intended to give him up. He answered, "O my uncle, by God, if they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, and ask me to abandon this course, I would not turn from it until God makes it victorious or I perish therein."

Tears flowed from the eyes of the Prophet. With a heavy heart, he got up to depart. But, Abu Talib could not look at his nephew's sorrow. Before he had reached the threshold, Abu Talib cried out, "Come back, my nephew." And when he returned, Abu Talib said,

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 256-66

“Go where you please and say what you will. By God, I will never deliver you to your enemies.”¹

PERSECUTION BEGINS

The Apostle continued to preach the message of God as vigorously as before. The Meccans were now desperate of forcing Abu Talib to give up Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and there was nothing that they could do to stop him. Their anger swelled such that they started inciting the tribes against those who had accepted Islam but had nobody to protect them. Every tribe asserted themselves on the Muslims amongst it; beating and putting them under chains, denying them food and water and forcing them to lie on the burning sand and under the scorching heat of the sun of Saudi Arabia.

Bilal was a slave who had embraced Islam. Umayya b. Khalaf, his master, used to bring him out at noontime and throw him on his back into the hot sand. He ordered to place a great rock on the chest of Bilal and then he would say to him, “No, by God, you will lie here till you die or deny Muhammad and worship Al-Lat and Al-Uzza.” Bilal endured the affliction, crying, “One,One”.

Abu Bakr once saw Bilal being tortured by his master. Sensing the servant’s conviction, he brought a tougher and stronger black slave in lieu of Bilal’s freedom.²

Ammar b. Yasir and his parents had accepted Islam. Bani Makhzum used to take them out in the full glare of the sun at the hottest part of the day and then take them to task for their faith. If the Prophet passed by them, he used to advise them: “Patience, O family of Yasir, patience. Your destination is paradise.” They endured all persecutions until ‘Bani Makhzum killed Ammar’s mother for she refused to renounce Islam.³

¹ *Ibn Hisham* Vol. I. pp. 265-66

² *Ibid.*, pp. 317-18

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 319-20

Mus'ab b. 'Umyr was the most well-dressed young man of Mecca. Mus'ab's mother, who possessed a handsome fortune, had brought him up in the life of luxury. He used to put on the costliest clothes perfumed with the best scent and always had his shoes imported from Hadramaut, then famous for manufacturing leather goods. The Apostle is reported to have once remarked about him: "I had not seen any young man in Mecca more handsome and far well-dressed or who had been brought up with more grandeur and comfort than Mus'ab b. Umayr." He came to know that the Apostle preached a new religion in the house of Arqam. 'Umayr's curiosity took him there but he came back as a true believer in Islam. He did not, however, declare his faith and kept on meeting the Apostle secretly. 'Uthman b. Talha once saw him performing the prayer and disclosed his secret to his mother and other tribesmen. The result was that he was seized and imprisoned, and remained in fetters until the Muslims first migrated to Abyssinia. When he returned from Abyssinia along with the other refugees, he was completely a changed man. His daintiness and elegance was given up in favor of such a rugged simplicity that his mother had to leave him alone instead of rebuking him.¹

Scared of the violent temper then prevailing against the Muslims in Mecca, others had sought the protection of their friends who were still polytheists. One of them was 'Uthman b. Mazun who was under the protection of Walid b. Al-Mughira, but as he felt ashamed of being shielded by anyone other than God, he renounced the protection of Walid. Shortly thereafter, he had a heated argument with a polytheist who slapped him so hard on his face that he lost an eye. Walid b. Al-Mughira was present during the incident after which he told him: 'Uthman, "By God, O son of my brother, your eye was secured against this injury and you were well-protected." "Nay, by God," replied 'Uthman b. Maz'un, "the eye that is still unhurt longs for what happened to the other for God's sake. O 'Abdu Shams, I am here in the vicinity and shelter

¹ *Tabaqat Ibn S'ad*, Vol. III, p. 82; *Isti'ab*, Vol. I, p. 288

of one who is exceedingly superior to you in honor and glory.”¹

When ‘Uthman b. ‘Affan accepted Islam, his uncle Hakam b. Abi al-As b. Umayya tied him securely with a rope and said, “Have you renounced the faith of your fathers for a new religion? By God, I will not release you until you abandon this belief.” ‘Uthman firmly replied, “By God, I will never give it up.” The firmness of ‘Uthman in his conviction ultimately led Hakam to unshackle him.”²

Kahbbab b. Al-Aratt, a companion of the Prophet, related his own story: “Some louts of the Quraysh came one day and seized me. Then they kindled a fire and dragged me into it, while a man kept me down by stomping on my chest.

Khabbab then bared his back which had white leprous spots.”³

III-TREATMENT OF THE PROPHET BY HIS PEOPLE

The efforts of the Quraysh to seduce the Prophet’s companions from their religion failed miserably, nor did they succeed in stopping the Prophet from preaching his religion fearlessly. The Qurayshites were first annoyed and agitated, and then dismayed by the expanding community of Muslims, they stirred up against him, calling him a liar, a sorcerer, a segregator and a poet; they insulted and abused him and started harassing him in every respect.

The notables of Mecca had assembled one day in Hijr⁴ when the Prophet was suddenly seen coming in the Holy Sanctuary. As he passed by them walking around the Ka’ba, they sneered at him and made sarcastic remarks. They offended him similarly for the

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 370-71

² *Tabaqat Ibn S’ad*, Vol. III, P. 37

³ *Tabaqat Ibn Sa’d*, Vol. III, 117

⁴ Hijr, also known as Hijr Isma’il, is the open space between the K’aba and a semicircular wall to its west, the two extremities of which are in line with the northern and southern sides of the Ka’ba. The wall bearing the name of Hatim was raised to mark the original length of the Ka’ba because the Quraysh had, while reconstructing it before the advent of Islam, reduced the length owing to paucity of funds.

second and then for third time that he passed by them. Now, the Prophet stopped and said: "Will you listen to me, O Quraysh? By Him who holds my life in His hand I bring you great slaughter." All of them were thunderstruck by these words to the point that it compelled others to address him graciously and thereafter made amends for their rudeness.

The next day when they had assembled in the Hijhr, the Prophet appeared once again. The Qurayshites, who were humiliated because of the incident the day before, drove to him in unison. While they mobbed him thus, one of them pulled the sheet of cloth hanging round his neck, which nearly choked his throat. Abu Bakr, who was present at that moment, severed them from the prophet by thrusting himself in between them. And with tears in his eyes he cried, "Would you kill a man simply because he acknowledges that Allah is his Lord?" Hearing this, they shun the Prophet but fell upon Abu Bakr dragging him by his hair and beard.

At another time, the Apostle even had to face a worse ordeal throughout the whole day. Whomsoever he met, whether freeman or slave, cursed or vilified him or tried to hurt him in any way. He returned to his house and wrapped himself up because of the torments he had to endure that day. Then it was that God revealed to him the opening verse of the Chapter "The Enshrouded One" - 'O thou wrapped up in thy cloak, Arise and warn.'¹

SUFFERINGS OF ABU BAKR

One morning Abu Bakr made bold move to invite a gathering of the heathens to the true faith in God and His Apostle but they fell upon him furiously and beat him mercilessly. 'Utba b. Rabia inflicted such severe injuries to his face with a pair of shoes that one could no longer distinguish the eyes from the nose of his swollen face.

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 289-91 and *Bukhari*

Abu Bakr fell unconscious and was brought to his house by Banu Taym, his kinsmen, in a precarious condition, his life hanging by a thread. He regained consciousness late in the afternoon, but even then, the first thing he asked was whether the Prophet was well and safe! His relations with the prophet rebuked him (for his concern for the Prophet, on whose account he had to suffer so grievously). Then, hardly raising his voice, he repeated his question to Umm Jamil, who had also accepted Islam. Umm Jamil motioned towards his mother who was standing near her, but Abu Bakr insisted on knowing about the Prophet, saying that there was no harm on telling him in her presence. At last, Umm Jamil told him that the Prophet was fine, but Abu Bakr would not be satisfied until he had himself seen the Apostle. He said, "I have taken a vow that I would not take anything until I have seen the Prophet myself." The two women waited until everybody had departed and then they brought Abu Bakr to the Prophet who was moved to see his pitiable condition. The Prophet prayed for his mother and invited her to accept Islam. It is reported that she readily pledge her trust in the Apostle of God.¹

QURAYSH IN A FIX

As the enmity of persecutors increased, so did the number of the Apostle's followers. The Quraysh were baffled at how to stop the people from taking the Prophet and his teachings seriously; at how to make them hold aloof to him and thus finally disregard him. Mecca was a commercial center frequented by tribes from far and near, and during the Haj, or when it is about to come, more of them were to come again. The people coming to Mecca had somehow to be kept at a distance from the Apostle, lest they should hear his sermons and digest his words, or that they may contemplate or reflect and meditate upon them. They went to Walid b. Al-Mughira, who was old and a man of standing, to seek his advice. He said, "O people of Quraysh, the time of Haj has come around when delegations of the Arabs will come here. They

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. I, pp. 439-41.

have all heard about this man (the Prophet), so agree upon a common ground hence you do not contradict one another and each one of you says the same thing.” Different suggestions were put forward but Walid was not satisfied. At last, he was asked to suggest some way out. Thereupon he said, “The most convincing thing in my opinion would be that all of you present him as a sorcerer. You should say that he has brought a message through which he creates a rift between fathers and sons, or where brothers fall out from brothers, as well as husbands part ways with their wives and that families break up under his influence.”

The Quraysh came back agreeable to the stratagem suggested by Walid. They sat on different paths when the time of Haj commenced, warning everyone to keep clear of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), repeating what they had already agreed to tell them.¹

HEARTLESSNESS OF THE QURAYSH

The persecutors of the Apostle were consumed by a rancor disregard for every consideration of Humanitarianism and kinship; their torture was embittered by the refinements of cruelty; and their misbehavior and unmannerliness was lax and ineffective enough to pollute the sacred asylum held as the holiest sanctum by the Arabs.

One day while the Apostle was praying at the Ka’bah, a company of the Quraysh occupied their places in the sanctuary. ‘Utba b. Abu Mu’ayt brought the fetus of a camel from somewhere and when the Apostle prostrated in prayer, he laid it on his back and shoulders. The Messenger of God remained in prostration until his daughter Fatima came running and threw it off him. She called down evil upon the one who had done it and the Prophet also joined her in the condemnation.²

HAMZA ACCEPTS ISLAM

Once, Abu Jahl happened to pass by the Prophet near the mount

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 270

² *Bukhari*

of Safa. He insulted the Apostle and heaped all manners of indignities upon him but the Apostle of God did not mind at all. After a little while, Hamza returned from a hunting spree with his bow hanging by his shoulder. Hamza was essentially a warrior, the bravest and the most courageous amongst the Quraysh. A slave woman belonging to ‘Abdallah b. Jad’an told him what had happened to his nephew. Hamza angrily turned back to the holy Mosque where Abu Jahl was sitting with his friends. Going straight to Abu Jahl, Hamza proceeded to strike his bow upon his head, saying, “Would you dare to insult and abuse him when I follow his religion and say what he says?” Abu Jahl kept quiet while Hamza, returning to his nephew, declared himself a convert to Islam. The Quraysh were put to a great loss by the conversion of a man of unquestionable character and legendary courage.¹

PROPOSAL OF ‘UTBA TO THE PROPHET

The number of the Prophet’s followers increased daily, threatening to turn the tide against Quraysh who as a tribe, chose to stay at the other end of the spiritual spectrum and therefore, took the situation as highly embarrassing. But they were unable to do anything to alter the tide of Islam. ‘Utba b. Rabia, the old and wise aristocrat of the Quraysh realized that he must find a way to patch up the differences with the Apostle. He consulted the Quraysh to make some concessions with the Apostle so that he might give up his mission. The Quraysh felt that it was a workable proposition and allowed him to negotiate with the Prophet on their behalf.

‘Utbah went to the Apostle and sat by his side. Then he said, “O my nephew, you know the worthy position you enjoy among us. But you have created a rift in your people by ridiculing them, insulting their gods as well as their religion, declaring their forefathers as heathens and denying their customs. Now, listen to me, I will offer you some proposals that will hopefully include one which will merit your acceptability.”

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 291-92

“O Abu Walid,”¹ replied the Prophet, “go on, I am listening.”

‘Utbah continued, “My Nephew, if you want to have wealth by what you preach, we will collect enough of it that you will be the richest of us. If you desire honor, we will make you our chief and leave every decision to your choice. If you aspire for kingship, we will recognize you as our monarch. And if you are possessed of a ghost or a jinn for which you have no remedy, we will find a competent physician for you and spend our wealth lavishly until your health is completely restored.”

The Apostle listened patiently. When ‘Utbah had finished talking, he asked him, “is it all that you have to say”? , to which ‘Utba replied “yes”.

“Now listen to me,” said the Prophet. “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, and he continued to recite Surah Fussilat,² ending the recitation at prostration,³ putting his hands behind him and leaning on them. The recitation ended, the Prophet prostrated and then said to ‘Utbah, “Abul Walid, you have heard what you heard, now it is for you to decide.”

As the Quraysh saw ‘Utbah returning, they said; “Honestly, he comes with an altered expression of his face.” And, when he finally came, they asked him what had happened.

“I have heard a discourse the like of which I had never heard before. I’ll swear to God, O Quraysh, that it is neither poetry, nor spells, nor witchcraft. Take my advice and leave this man alone.” The Quraysh berated ‘Utba, and said, “now you may do whatever you think fit.”⁴

MUSLIMS MIGRATE TO ABYSSINIA

The Apostle saw his followers standing up to their convictions in spite of persecutions, and his heart was laden with grief. And since he could do nothing to protect them, he advised them to migrate

¹ Father of Walid. The Arabs called the elders by the name of their sons.

² Surah 41, Chap. ‘They are expounded

³ Verse 37

⁴ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 293-94

to the country of the Christian ruler, Negus of Abyssinia, who was reputed to be just and kindhearted. It was a friendly country, said the Apostle, where the Muslims could stay until such time as God relieved them of their distress.

Thereupon, ten Muslims left Mecca for Abyssinia. This was the first migration in Islam, where ‘Uthman b. Maz’un was elected as the leader of this first batch of emigrants. After them J’afar b. Abi Talib departed from Mecca, then a number of Muslim followed suit, one after another; some went alone while others took their families with them. A total of eighty-three persons are reported to have fled to Abyssinia.¹

QURAYSH PURSUE THE MUSLIMS

The news that the Muslims were living in peace in Abyssinia reached Mecca making the Qurayshites all the more depressed and discouraged. So they decided to send ‘Abdallah b. Abu Rabia and ‘Amr b. Al ‘As b. Wail as their emissaries, laden with choicest presents of Mecca for Negus, his nobles and chiefs, to get the exiles back from Abyssinia. The agents of the Quraysh first bribed the courtiers of Negus with their presents to espouse their cause before the king, then they presented these gifts to him and said:

“Some foolish young men of our tribe have taken refuge in Your Majesty’s country. They have abandoned their own religion but neither accepted yours, and have invented a new faith which neither of us know. Our nobles, (who are their elders and guardians) have sent us to Your Majesty so we could get the exiles back from you, for they are closer to them and that they know their faults.”

The bodyguards of Negus who heard this whispered to him in chorus, “They are correct, surrender the refugees to them”. But king Negus was enraged; he disliked to forsake those who had sought his shelter.” He said, “no, by God, I will not surrender

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. Pp. 320-21

them”. Thereafter, he summoned the Muslims to his court in the presence of his bishops, and asked the muslims: “ what is that religion for which you have forsaken your people, and neither accepted my religion nor any other?”

J’AFARS PORTRAYAL OF ISLAM AND IGNORANCE

J’afar’s b. Abi Talib, the cousin of the Prophet, then rose to explain what the King had asked. He said:

“O King, we were an unenlightened people plunged in ignorance. We worshipped idols, we ate dead animals, and we committed abominations: we broke natural ties, we mistreat our neighbors and our strong exploit the weak. We thus lived that way, until God raised among us an Apostle, of whose noble birth and lineage, truthfulness, honesty and purity we were aware. He invited us to acknowledge the Unity of God and to worship Him, and to renounce the stones and idols our forefathers and we ourselves used to venerate. He enjoined us to speak the truth, to redeem our pledges, to be kind and considerate to our kins and neighbors; he forbade us to refrain from every vice, bloodshed, shamelessness, lies and deceit; and asked us neither to encroach upon the substance of orphans nor to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to pay divine homage to Allah alone and never associate ought with Him; he ordered us to offer prayers, to pay the poor-due, to observe fast (thus enumerating other injunctions of Islam). We acknowledged his truthfulness and believed in him; we followed him in whatever he brought from God; and we worshipped only One God without associating ought with Him; we treated as unlawful what he forbade and accepted what he made lawful for us. From then on, we were estranged from our own people such that they persecuted us, tried to seduce us from our faith and forced us to take back our idols for our God; and they compelled us to return to the abominations we used to commit earlier.

“So when they tortured and held us under their tyranny and stood between us and our religion, we fled to your country, having chosen you above others for our refuge. We have come here, O King, to your country seeking your protection and we do hope that we shall not be dealt with unjustly.”

Negus listened patiently to J'afar b. Abi Talib. Then he asked J'afar if he had something brought by his Prophet from God.

J'afar replied in the affirmative. Negus asked him to recite the same. Thereupon J'afar recited the opening verses of Surah Maryam.¹ Negus wept until his beard was wet, as the bishop sobbed until their scrolls were moistened with their tears, too .

DISCOMFITURE OF THE QURAYSHITE EMISSARIES

“Truly, this and what Jesus brought are traditions from the same Heavenly light”, said Negus. Then turning to the envoys of the Quraysh he continued, “You may go. By God, I shall never give them up to you.”

Now, the shrewd poet ‘Amr b. al-‘As hurled his last shot, and what a deadly shot at that for he said, “O King, they assert a dreadful thing about Jesus which is even unwholesome to repeat before thee.”

Negus demanded from J'afar, “What do you say about Jesus?”

J'afar b. Abi Talib replied, “we say about which our Prophet has taught us. He was a creature of God and His Prophet, as well as His Spirit and His Word, which was cast unto the blessed Virgin Maryam.”

Negus took a straw from the ground and said, “By God, Jesus, son of Mary, does not exceed what you have said by the length of this straw.”

Negus treated the Muslims with honor and pledged his protection to them. Both crestfallen envoys of the Quraysh had to leave Abyssinia in great shame while the Muslims lived there in peace and security.²

¹ 19th Chapter, “Mary”

² *Ibn Hisham*, pp. 334-38

‘UMAR EMBRACES ISLAM

Islam was then further strengthened by the conversion of ‘Umar to the truth brought by the Apostle of God.

‘Umar was one of the nobles of the Quraysh, broad-shouldered, tall and brave. He was feared and respected by all. How the Apostle wished that he should accept Islam, as he often prayed to God for showing him the right path.

Fatima bint al-Khattab, the sister of ‘Umar, accepted Islam and shortly thereafter, her husband Sa’id b. Zayd, too, followed suit. But both kept it a closely guarded secret since they feared the violent inclination of ‘Umar’s nature. They knew that ‘Umar was a zealous adherent of his forefathers’ religion and carried a bitter aversion to the new faith in his bosom. Khabbab b. Aratt secretly taught the Qur’an to Fatima bint al-Khattab after her conversion.

‘Umar planned to murder the Apostle. One day he sallied forth, with a sword hanging from his neck to find out the house near as-Safa where the Apostle and his companions were reported to have assembled. Nu’aym b. ‘Abdullah, who belonged to ‘Umar’s tribe of Bani ‘Adiy and who had already acknowledged faith in the Prophet, happened to see ‘Umar along the way, armed and fiercely heated. He asked, “Umar, where are you going?”

“I seek Muhammad,” was ‘Umar’s reply, “and I will slay him; he has forsaken our religion, shattered the unity of the Quraysh; ridiculed them and vilified their gods. Today I will settle the matter once and for all.”

“Anger has blinded you,” retorted Nu’aym, “would it not be better to set your own family in order?”

‘Umar was taken aback. He asked, “And who are they in my family?”

Nu’aym replied, “Your brother-in-law and cousin Sa-id b. Zayd and your sister Fatima. They have given faith to Muhammad (peace be upon him) and accepted his religion. Better deal with them first.”

‘Umar immediately hurried on to the house of his sister. Khabbab

was at that time reading the Surah 'Ta Ha'¹ to the couple from a manuscript he had with him. When they caught the footsteps of 'Umar, Khabbab hid himself inside a small room whereas Fatima instantly concealed the manuscript beneath her thigh. But as 'Umar had already heard Khabbab reciting the scripture, he demanded on entering the house, "What was this nonsense murmur that I heard?"

"Nothing", both answered, but "what have you heard?"

"Yes, I accidentally discovered," continued 'Umar angrily. "I know that both of you have joined the sect of Muhammad." With these words, 'Umar threw himself upon his brother-in-law. Fatima rushed in to save her husband, but 'Umar struck her hard and wounded her.

All this happened abruptly, but now, both husband and wife boldly and openly asserted: "yes, we are Muslims; we believed in Allah and His Apostle; do whatever you will."

'Umar saw the blood flowing from the wound he had inflicted on his sister; his anger gave in to shame coupled with admiration for her courage. Cooled down, he asked for the manuscript that he had heard Khabbab reading. He said "show me the manuscript. I want to know what Muhammad has brought." In reality, 'Umar knew the art of reading and writing.

Fatima, however, replied, "I fear what you might do with it."

"Umar promised, with solemn assurance, not to destroy it. Fatima, too, thought that he might change his views after reading the scripture. She said to him politely but firmly, "My brother, you are unclean because of your polytheism, and only the pure can touch it." 'Umar rose and took a bath. His sister then gave him the pages on which Surah 'Ta Ha' was written. He had read only a few lines when he exclaimed in amazement,

¹ 20th Chapter of the Qur'an

“How noble and sublime is this speech!”

Thereupon Khabbab came out of his concealment and said, “O ‘Umar, by God, I hope that Allah would bless you with His Apostle’s call; for I heard him just last night imploring earnestly; O Allah, strengthen Islam by Abul Hakam¹ or ‘Umar b. al-Khattab. Now, ‘Umar have some fear of God.”

‘Umar asked Khabbab to lead him to the Apostle so that he might accept Islam. On being told by Khabbab that the Apostle was in a house at as-Safa with his companions, ‘Umar immediately took his sword and headed for him. When ‘Umar knocked at the door indicated by Khabbab, one of the companions got up through a chink in the door to be sure of the newcomer. Seeing ‘Umar with his sword on, he hurried back appalled to report, “Apostle of Allah, ‘Umar b. al-Khattab is here armed with his sword.”

Hamza intervened to say, “let him in. If he comes with a peaceful intent, then it is alright, but if not, therewith we will kill him with his own sword.” The Apostle ordered the companion to open the door for ‘Umar to enter and thus join them.

As ‘Umar entered the door, the Apostle went forth to meet him in the room. He seized his cloak and pulling it rather violently, said to him, “What for have you come, O son of Khattab? By God, I see that some calamity is to befall you before you have the final summons.”

But ‘Umar replied submissively, “O Messenger of Allah, I have come to attest my faith in Allah and His Apostle and what he has brought from God.”

The Apostle raised the cry of Allah-O-Akbar so loudly that all the companions present in the house came to know that ‘Umar, had just accepted Islam.²

¹ Abu Jahl

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 342-46

‘Umar’s conversion was a turning point in the fortunes of Islam as it made Muslims feel all the more confident and strengthened. Hamza had already accepted Islam beforehand, and now with ‘Umar’s conversion, the Muslims knew that it was likely to send the Quraysh in jitters. They were particularly embittered on learning of ‘Umar’s conversion. The Muslims were thus right in their reckoning for none of those who had embraced Islam in the past made such a stir nor created such a tense excitement and impact as did that of ‘Umar’s.

‘Umar proclaimed his faith publicly. As soon as the Quraysh came to know about it, they drew the sword against ‘him but found the same prepared to take the course. Ultimately, with his inherent might, the people who valued their lives did not dare to put up a clash with ‘Umar but decided rather to keep their hands off him.¹

BOYCOTT OF BANI HASHIM

The spread of Islam among the tribes further aggravated the resentment of the Quraysh. They came together and decided to draw up a decree ostracizing Bani Hashim and Bani ‘Abdul Muttalib. It was decided that nobody should marry the women of these two clans nor give their women to them in marriage; neither should buy from nor sell to them. Having solemnly agreed to these points, the agreement was put into writing and the parchment was hung in the K’aba in order to give it a religious sanction thereby making it mandatory for all.

IN THE SH’EB ABI TALIB

Bani Hashim and Bani Abdul Muttalib joined Abu Talib after the boycott was enforced and withdrew to a narrow glen or wadi known as Sh’eb Abi Talib. It was the seventh year of the Prophet’s mission. Abu lahab b. ‘Abdul Muttalib, however, decided to join with the Quraysh, leaving his kith and kin covered by the ban.

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 349

Weeks and months had passed, and the people of Hashim lived in misery and hunger. The ban was so rigorously enforced that the Prophet's clan was reduced to eating acacia leaves and the cries of hungry children reverberated all over the valley. The caravans passed peacefully through the streets of Mecca but the Quraysh told the merchants not to buy from or sell anything to the two forsaken clans. This resulted to the prices being pegged so high that it was extremely impossible for the beleaguered people to purchase even their basic necessities.

The decree of proscription lasted for three years --- and for the same number of years Bani Hashim and Bani 'Abdul Muttalib lived in exile and endured the hardships of a blockade. But not all Quraysh people were utterly humiliated and deprived. Those of them who were good-natured and kindhearted occasionally supplied food secretly to the exiles. However, the Apostle never ceased preaching the message he had brought to his own people, and, even towards others, whenever he got the opportunity. Bani Hashim on their part, endured every trouble with exemplary patience and fortitude.

ANNULMENT OF THE DECREE

The pitiable condition of the exiles gave rise to a feeling of resentment against the ban confronting the gracious and genial sons of the desert. Hisham b. 'Amr b. Rabi'a took the initiative to end the boycott. He was amiable and kindhearted, as well as highly esteemed by the Quraysh. He approached some other considerate and well-disposed persons and put them to shame for allowing tyranny to linger on. At last, Hisham, supported by four other persons agreed to stand together till the decree of boycott was cancelled. Then, when the Quraysh had assembled in the sanctuary, Zuhayr whose mother 'Atika was daughter of 'Abdul Muttalib, cried out to the people, "O ye people of Mecca, shall we eat and drink while Bani Hashim should die of hunger, unable even to buy or sell? By God I will not take rest until this cruel and unjust decree is torn into pieces."

Abu Jahl tried to intervene but found everybody against him. Mut'im b. 'Adiy then went up to tear the document into pieces but discovered that with the exception of the words "In Thy name, O Allah" the rest of the document had already been eaten up by white ants. (The Apostle had already told his uncle, Abu Talib, that God has given the white ants power over the document.)

The blighted document was, however, taken out and thrown away and thus ended the boycott and everything that was written on it.¹

DEATH OF ABU TALIB AND KHADIJAH

Soon after the end of the boycott, in the tenth year of his mission, the Prophet lost his uncle, Abu Talib and his loving wife, Khadija. Both were his protectors, tried and true helpers and devotedly attached to him. Their deaths meant a great loss to the Apostle who at that time was already destined to encounter as many adversities in succession soon thereafter.

SPARKLING SYMPHONY OF THE QUR'AN

Tufayl b. 'Amr al-Daust was a prominent poet honored by the Arabs. When he came to Mecca, some of the Quraysh warned him against meeting the Apostle. They told him, as usual, that Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had created dissension among the Quraysh and so he had to be careful lest he should also fall under the Prophet's evil spell. Tufayl relates: "By God, they were so insistent that I decided not to listen or speak to him. I went so far as to stuff cotton in my ears before going to the holy mosque. Suddenly, my eyes captured the Apostle who was offering prayer near me. I stood by his side and thus God caused me to hear something of his speech. It was beautiful and noble. I thought, that my mother might curse me, for I am a poet and the connoisseur for nothing good or evil in a speech can elude me. Why should anything prevent me from listening to his speech? If it is good, then I shall accept it, but if contrarily bad, I shall reject it." He met the Apostle at his house where he invited him to accept

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 350-51

Islam and recited the Qur'an to him. Tufayl embraced Islam and went back to his tribe determined to preach the faith of God. He refused to do anything with his household members until they had also acknowledged God and His Apostle. All of them became Muslims and Islam spread thereafter in the tribe of Daus.¹

Abu Bakr used to pray within his house. Not being satisfied with it, he further selected a place in the courtyard of his residence where he started offering prayers and reciting the Qur'an. Abu Bakr was tenderhearted and when he recited the Qur'an, shedding tears all the while, youths, slaves and women used to gather around him listening to his recitation. Now, the Qurayshite chiefs got alarmed at Abu Bakr's recitation of the Qur'an so he sent for Ibn al-Dughunna who had pledged protection for Abu Bakr. When Ibn al-Dughunna came, they said to him, "We accepted your pledge of protection for Abu Bakr on the condition that he prays inside his house but he has started praying and reciting in the open. We fear he might seduce our women and children. Now, if he agrees to offer his prayers secretly within his house, it is well and good, otherwise he should renounce your protection. We neither want to make you break your word nor can we allow him to do it openly."

Ibn al-Dughunna informed Abu Bakr of what he had been told by the Quraysh, but he replied, "I renounce your guardianship; I am contented with the protection and custody of my Lord."²

JOURNEY TO TA'IF

The death of Abu Talib signaled the beginning of a difficult period for the Apostle. None of the Qurayshites dared touch the Apostle during the lifetime of Abu Talib, but now the restraint was gone. In one instance, dust was thrown over his head. And to make matters far worse, the Quraysh, moved by the desire to impose themselves upon the apostle, insulted and mocked at him and

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 382-384

² *Bukhari*, On the authority of 'Aisha, Chapter. Hijrah.

made caustic remarks on Islam. When the pagans persisted with their mockery and sarcasm and resolute behaviour, the Apostle thought of going to Ta'if to seek the help of Tha'if.¹ The Prophet intended to invite them to Islam for he believed that they would receive his message with sympathy. His expectation was apparently well grounded as he had spent his childhood with Bani S'ad who were settled near Ta'if.

Ta'if was a delightful city, only next to Mecca in its population and prosperity, holding an important position in the Peninsula as alluded to in this verse of the Qur'an.

"And they say: If only this Qur'an had been revealed to some great man of the two towns (Mecca and Ta'if)?" (Qur'an 43:31).

Taif was also a religious center since pilgrims from every part of the country visit its so-called "temple of al-Lat" and, thus, it competed with Mecca in such respect for the latter housed Hubal, the chief deity of Arabia. Ta'if was, as it still is today, the summer resort of the Meccan aristocracy. An Umayyad poet, 'Umar b. Rabi'a said about his beloved:

"Winter in Mecca, living in clover, In Ta'if she spends the summer."

The inhabitants of Ta'if, endowed with diversified large farms and vineyards, were wealthy and prosperous. They had become conceited and boastful embodying the following description of the Qur'anic verse:

"And we sent not unto any township a warner, but its pampered ones declared: Lo! we are disbelievers in that which ye bring unto us.

¹ Authorities hold the view that the Prophet undertook the journey to Ta'if towards the end of Shawwal in the tenth year of Apostleship (*Khatim un Naibyin* by Sheikh Muhammad Abu Zuhra, Vol. I, p. 580)

“And they say: We are more (than you) in wealth and children. We are not the punished!” (Qur’an 35:34-35)

In Taif, the Apostle first met the chiefs and leaders of Tha'if whom he invited to accept Islam. They were, however, rude and discourteous in their behaviour to the Apostle. Not being content with their insolent reply, they even stirred up some gangs of the town to harass the Apostle. These riff-raffs followed the Prophet, abusing and crying and throwing stones on him, until he was compelled to take refuge in an orchard. The Apostle consequently had to endure even more troubles in Ta'if than he had to face in Mecca. These jerks based on either side of the path threw stones at him until his feet were injured and smeared with blood. These oppressions grievously dejected the Apostle, whereby being in such a state of depression, a prayer citing his helplessness and pitiable condition and seeking the aid of God spontaneously came thru his lips:

‘O Allah’, said the Prophet, “to Thee I complain of my of my weakness, resourcelessness and humiliation before the people. Thou art the most merciful, the Lord of the weak and my master. To whom wilt thou confide me? To one estranged, bearing ill will, or, an enemy given power over me? If thou art not worth on me, I care not, for thy favor is abundant upon me. I seek refuge in the light of thy countenance by which all darkness is dispelled and every affair of this world and the next is set right, lest thy anger should descend upon me or thy displeasure light upon me. I need only thy pleasure and satisfaction for only thou enablest me to do good and evade the evil. There is no power and no might save in thee.”

The Lord then sent the angel of mountains who sought the Prophet’s permission to join together the two hills between which Ta’if was located but the Messenger of God replied, “No, I hope God will bring forth from their loins people who will worship God

alone, associating nothing with Him.”¹

Moved to compassion by the grief of the Apostle, ‘Utbah and Shayba b. Rabi’a sent for ‘Addas, one of their young Christian slaves, and told him to take a bunch of grapes on a platter for the Apostle to which the bondman obeyed. While in the apostle’s presence, Addas observed his kind demeanor that compelled him to talk to him and instantly professed his faith in Allah and His Apostle.²

The Apostle then returned to Mecca where the Quraysh were as bitterly opposed to him as ever, deriding, annoying and assailing him day after day.

THE ASCENSION

It was during this period that the Prophet found himself transported at night to the K’abah and from there to the place of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem, where Masjid-ul-Aqsa now stands. Then he was borne to the celestial regions where he witnessed the seven heavens, met the prophets of yore and saw the remarkable signs of divine majesty about which the Qur’an says:

“The eye turned not aside nor yet was overbold, verily he saw one of the greater revelations of his Lord.” (Qur’an 53:17-18.)

Occurrence of the event at that time was meant to confer dignity upon the Apostle; it signified something like viands of higher regale in order to console and alleviate the feelings of distress caused to him by the persecution of the pagans at Ta’if. After the Ascension incident, the Apostle told the people about his nocturnal journey, but the Quraysh mocked him and shook their heads stating that it was inconceivable and beyond the bounds of reason. When Abu Bakr saw the Quraysh accusing the Apostle of falsehood he said, “what makes you wonder about it? If he said

¹ Muslim, *Kitab-ul-Jihad*

² Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 419-22, Ibn Kathir, Vol. II, pp. 149-53 *Zad al-ma’ad*, Vol. p. 302

this, then it must be true. By God, he tells me that the revelation descends upon him from Heaven in a flash or in an instant during the day or night and I testify for him. This is even more unimaginable and difficult than what seems to astound you.¹

REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ASCENSION

The ascension did not occur in a routine or ordinary run of things only to demonstrate the profound phenomena of the Kingdom of God in the Heavens and the earth to the Prophet of Islam. More than that, such prophetic journey of tremendous importance alludes to a number of other significant and complex realities of far-reaching concern to humanity. The two Surahs of Isra and An-Najm revealed in connection with this heavenly journey indicate that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was charged with the office of prophethood for both the Houses of God, those in Jerusalem and Mecca, and was sent as the leader of the east and the west or the entire human race 'till the end of time. As the inheritor of all the Prophets of old, he represented the fulfillment and consummation of mankind's religious development. His nightly journey from Mecca to Jerusalem expresses, in a figurative way, that his personality conformed and alluded to the oneness of Bait-ul-Haram² and masjid-ul-Aqsa³. That all the prophets arranged themselves behind him in the masjid-ul-aqsa shows that the doctrine of Islam, preached by him, was final, universal and all-comprehensive--meant for every class and section of human society throughout the ages.

The event is, at the same time, indicative of the comprehensiveness of the Holy prophet's apostleship, the place accorded to his followers in the great task of humanity's guidance and the distinctive character of his message.

Frankly speaking, the ascension of the Apostle represents a demarcation line between the regional, limited and variable rules of

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. II, p. 96, *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 399

² K'aba at Mecca

³ The Dome of Rock at Jerusalem

divine guidance entrusted to the prophets of old and the global, comprehensive and abiding principles of faith conferred to the universal leader of human race. Had the Apostle been a sectional or regional guide, a national leader, the savior of any particular race or the restorer of the glory of any particular people, there would have been no need to honor him with ascension to the heavens nor would he have been required to perceive the hidden phenomena of the Heavens and the earth. Nor would it have been necessary to create a new link between the celestial and the earthly surface of the Divine Kingdom; in that case the confines of his own land, his surroundings, environs and the times would have been sufficient enough; and there would have been no need for him to divert his attention to any other land or country. Neither his ascension to the most sublime regions of the Heavens and to the “Lot-Tree of the Farthest Limit”¹ nor even the nocturnal journey to the far away Jerusalem, then in the grip of the powerful Christian Empire of Byzantium, would have been necessary at all.

The ascension of the Apostle was a divine proclamation that he had nothing to do with the category of national or political leaders whose endeavours are limited to their own country and nation. For they serve the nations and races to which they belong and are a product of their time, they serve the need of a particular juncture. The Apostle of Islam, on the contrary, belonged to the luminous line of the messengers of God who communicate the inspired message of Heaven to the earth. They are links between God and his creatures. Their messages transcend the limitations of time and space, race and color and country and nation, for they are meant for the exaltation of man regardless of his color, race or country.

OBLIGATORY PRAYER

On this occasion, God made fifty prayers a day obligatory for the Apostle and his followers. The Apostle constantly implored God for the reduction of the burden of prayers until the Lord was also

¹ The Qur’anic expression *Sidratul Muntaha* (cf. Q 53:14) alludes to the shady lot-tree of Paradise. According to some of the earlier commentators of the Qur’an the divine writs are first sent to the lot-tree from where the angels bring it to earth.

pleased to limit these to only five daily prayers. The Lord was also pleased to declare that whoever properly performs these five prayers daily would be recompensed for all the fifty daily prayers enjoined earlier.¹

TRIBES INVITED TO ISLAM

Thereafter the Apostle started contracting the members of different tribes who came to Mecca for the pilgrimage. He used to explain to them the doctrine of Islam and to solicit support in his mission. He often told the tribesmen. “O ye people, I have been sent to you as the messenger of God for asking you to worship Him, to call on you to associate nothing with Him and to renounce everything you have elevated as His co-equal. Believe in God and His Apostle and protect me until I have explained that which God has sent to me.”

Whenever the Apostle contacted any tribe and finished talking to it, Abu Lahab usually stood up to say, “O ye people, this fellow wants you to cast off your obedience to Al-Lat and Al-Uzza and your allies, the Jinn and to exchange your Gods from the wickedness and innovation he has brought. Don’t take orders from him nor pay any heed to him.”²

THE RISKY PATH OF ISLAM

The way leading to Allah and Islam was laden with grave danger and anyone who wanted to walk the track had to be prepared to play with fire. Mecca had become so unsafe and vulnerable for the Muslims that acceptance of Islam meant taking one’s life in one’s hand.

The story of Abu Dharr Ghifari’s conversion to Islam as told by ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abbas shows how perilous it had become even to call upon the Apostle in those days.

“When Abu Dharr heard of the advent of the Prophet, he said

¹ *Bukhari, Kitab-us-Salat*

² *Ibn Hisham, Vol. pp. 422-23*

unto his brother: 'Proceed to that valley and enlighten me about the man who claimeth to be a prophet and to receive communication from Heaven. Listen to some of his sayings and then return unto me.' So the brother went forth, reached the Prophet and heard some of his sayings. Thereafter, he returned to Abu Dharr and said unto him: 'I found that he enjoineeth the highest principles of morality, and that his speech is not poetry.' - But (Abu Dharr) said: thou hast not been able to satisfy me.

"Thereupon he took some provisions, together with an old water skin full of water, and proceeded to Mecca. Then he went to the mosque (K'aba) and began to look for the Prophet for he knew him not, and was reluctant to ask about him, and thus he spent part of the night. Thereupon 'Ali saw him and recognized the same to be a stranger; and when Abu Dharr met 'Ali, he went with him (to the latter's house). Until daybreak, neither of the two asked any questions of each other. Then once again he (Abu Dharr) went with his waterskin and his provisions to the mosque and allowed that day to pass 'til evening without finding the Prophet, although the latter saw him from there. Then he returned to his resting-place. While in there, 'Ali passed by him and said: "Is it not time that a man should know his abode?" And his remarks made him rise and finally brought him to his house, with neither of the two asking any questions of each other, too. And on the third day 'Ali did likewise, and he ('Abu Dharr) stayed with him. Thereafter ('Ali) said: "Will you not tell me what had brought you here?" to which Abu Dharr answered: "I will do so only if you promise me that you will guide me right", whereupon 'Ali agreed outright. After that, Abu Dharr told him all. Then, 'Ali said: "Behold, it is true, and he is indeed an Apostle of God! Tomorrow morning, you follow me. If indeed I see any danger for you, I will stop as if to pass water; but if I go on, then follow me and enter in whichever place I do." Abu Dharr did so, following 'Ali until he finally found the prophet's house and entered in it together with him ('Ali). Then he listened to some of the Prophet's sayings and embraced Islam on the spot. Thereupon the Prophet said unto him: "Return unto thy people and inform them about me and await my

bidding.” Afterwhich Abu Dharr said: “ by Him in whose hand is my soul, indeed I shall loudly proclaim the truth among them!”

Then he left and went to the mosque and called out at the top of his voice. He proceeded to say: “I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is His Apostle”. Thereupon, the people of Mecca broke upon him, beat him and then threw him into the ground. At such juncture, Al-‘Abbas came, knelt down to see him and said to the people: “woe unto you, know ye not that he belongeth to the tribe of Ghifar, and that your merchants’ road to Syria passeth through their country?” Thus, Al- ‘Abbas rescued him from them. That incident did not stop Abu Dharr from doing the same thing again, prompting the people (of Mecca) to impose themselves over him anew, whereupon Al- Abbas came once more to his rescue.”¹

THE BEGINNING OF ISLAM AMONG THE ANSAR

The Apostle met some of the Ansars belonging to the Khazraj at ‘Aqabah² when he went to preach Islam to the tribes throughout the tenure of pilgrimage. He told them about Islam and called on them to serve God alone, reciting some Qur’anic verses in the process. As these people lived in Yathrib side by side with the Jews who often told them that an Apostle of God was soon to come, they said to one another: “by God, this is the same thing that the Jews informed us; lo, nobody should now get ahead of you.” Thereupon they accepted his teachings and embraced Islam. They also said to the Apostle, “when we left our people, conflict and hatred divided them more than any other. Perhaps God will unite them through you. We shall inform them to accept this religion of yours which has been accepted by us, and if God unites them on you, then no man shall be honored more than you.”³ These men returned to their homes after accepting Islam, where they told others about the Apostle and invited them to accept the new faith.

¹ *Bukhari*, Section: Abu Dharr’s conversion to Islam

² ‘Aqabah means deep valley

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 428-29

Islam quickly spread in Madina until there was no home left of the Ansar wherein the Apostle was not mentioned.¹

FIRST PLEDGE OF ‘AQABAH

At the pilgrimage the next year, twelve men belonging to the Ansars met the Apostle at ‘Aqabah. They pledged themselves to the Apostle vowing neither to commit theft nor fornication, nor to kill their children, to obey him in what was right, and to associate nothing with God. When these people left Madina, the Apostle sent Mus’ab b. ‘Umayr with them to teach the Qur’an to the people there as well as to expound Islam and instruct them about the religion; wherefore ‘Umayr came to be called “the reader” in Madina. He lived with As’ad b. Zurara and also led prayers.²

THE REASON FOR ANSAR’S ACCEPTANCE OF ISLAM

It was a critical juncture when God afforded the opportunity of helping and defending Islam to the Aus and the Khazraj,³ the two influential tribes of Yathrib. For there was nothing more precious at the moment than to own and accept Islam, they were really fortunate in getting the most relevant and timely opportunity to take precedence over all other tribes of Hijaz in welcoming and defending the religion of God. They overshadowed their compatriots since all the tribes of Arabia, in general, and the Quraysh, in particular, had proven themselves ungrateful as well as incompetent to take advantage of the greatest favor bestowed upon them. “*And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path*”. (*Qur’an* 2:213).

Diverse causes and circumstances, proceeding from the will of Almighty God, had opened the door for the acceptance of Islam by the Aus and the Khazraj. These tribes were not of the Meccan Qurayshites type for unlike the latter, the Aus and the Khazraj

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 428-29

² *Ibid.*, p. 434

³ The two tribes of Aus and Khazraj had branches off from the tribe of Azd, belonging of Qahtan. The forefather of these tribes, Th’alaba b. ‘Amr, had migrated from Yemen to Hijaz after the destruction of Ma’arib Dam (120 BC) and settled in Medina

were kind-hearted and sweet-tempered, immune from the Qurayshite traits of immoderation, stubbornness and vanity, and hence they were responsive, open to reason. These were the characteristics inherited from their progenitors, the Yemenites, about whom the Apostle had remarked after meeting one of their deputations: "The people of Yemen have come to you, and they have the tenderest hearts." Both these tribes of Yathrib originally belonged to Yemen for their forefathers had come down from there. Commending the merits of these people, God has said in the Qur'an:

"Those who entered the city and the faith before them love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breast no need for that which hath been given them, but prefer the fugitives above themselves though poverty becomes their lot." (Qur'an 59:9)

Another reason was that continuous internecine collision had already exhausted both tribes. Exhausted and distracted by the famous battle of Bu'ath¹ fought a short time ago, the said tribes were desirous of peace and harmony and wanted to avoid renewal of warfare. Such was their anxiety for peace that the first Muslims of Madina had said to the Prophet, "When we left our people, discord and conflict and enmity divided them more than any other. Perhaps God will unite them through you, and if God unites them on you, then no other man will be more than honored as you do." 'Aisha once said that the battle of Bu'ath was really a divine intervention and a blessing in disguise which served as a prelude to the Apostle's migration to Madina.

Yet another reason was that the Quraysh, like the rest of the Arabian tribes, had for a long time lost touch with prophethood and the prophets and had hardly any recollection of their teachings. Deeply immersed in ignorance and idolatry as well as being completely strangers to the arts of reading and writing, they had become overzealous heathens; actually, they had but little

¹ Fought in about 615 A.D.

contacts even with the Jews and Christians, the followers of the prophets and their scriptures (although these had since been distorted). This was plain, plum fact to which the Qur'an makes a reference in these words:

"In order that you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are heedless. " (Qur'an 36:6)

But the Aus and the Khazraj were neighbours of Yathrib Jews whom they heard talking about the prophets and reciting their scriptures. The Jews often warned them that a prophet was to come in the later times with whom they would ally themselves and kill the heathens just as the people of 'Ad and Iram were massacred.¹

"And when there cometh unto them a Scripture from Allah, confirming that in their possession - though before disbelieved - and when there cometh unto them that which they know (to be the Truth) they disbelieve therein. The curse of Allah is on disbelievers." (Qur'an 2:89)

Aus and Khazraj as well as other Arab tribes settled in Madina were heathens like the idolatrous Quraysh and the rest of the Arabs. But unlike them, they had become accustomed to the idea of revelation in the form of a scripture of supernatural origin, prophecy, apostleship, inspiration, requital and the hereafter. This was courtesy of their uninterrupted association with the Jews of the city from whom they had business transactions, made war and peace, and lived side by side. They had, thus, come to know the teachings of the prophets of old and the reason why God sends them from time to time. This was of great advantage to them, for, when they learned about the Apostle on the occasion of Haj at Mecca, they at once grabbed the opportunity as if they were already prepared for it.

¹ Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. I, p. 217

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF MADINA

Apart from the great honor to be bestowed upon the people of Madina and such other reasons accessible only to the All-knowing God, one of the considerations in the selection of the town as the future center of Islam was that it was, from a strategic point of view brought about by its geography and defense, impregnable like a fortified city. No other town of the Peninsula enjoyed the same advantage. Lying in a lava plain, surrounded on all sides by chains of high mountains, the Western side of the city is protected by the lava and extremely uneven hilly terrain known as Harratal-al-Wabra¹ while Harra-I-Waqim surrounds it on the eastern side. Madina lies unprotected and open to military advance only in the north (where, in 5 A.H., the Apostle ordered to dig trenches on the occasion of the battle of clans). Thickly clustered plantations of date-palm groves encompassed the town on the remaining sides. An army taking this route would have had to maintain communications through deep valleys and ravines. Thus, it would have been difficult to attack Madina in full force from these sides while the defenders could have easily conquered the invaders through small outlying pickets.

Ibn Is'haq writes: "Only one side of Madina was exposed, and the rest of the sides were strongly protected by buildings and date-palm groves through which an enemy could not get access."

The Apostle had perhaps covertly referred to this very aspect of Madina when he said before his migration: "I have been shown the goal of your migration - a land of palm-trees lying between two tracts strewn with black, rugged stones." All those who resolved upon migration proceeded thereupon to Madina.²

The two Arab tribes of Madina, the Aus and the Khazraj, were well known for their passionate, chauvinistic spirit of the clan; self-respect, boldness and valor while riding was one of the manly skills in which they excelled. Freedom of the desert was in their blood:

¹ Harrah or Labah is a terrain full of volcanic igneous rocks of dark green colour and uneven shape which are produced by the matter flowing from a volcano.

² Bukhari, chap. Migration.

neither had they ever submitted to any authority nor paid impost to a sovereign. The heroic character of these tribes was plainly set forth when the chief of Aus, S'ad b. Mu'adh had said to the Apostle during the battle of Trenches: "when we and these people were polytheist and idolaters, not serving God nor knowing Him, they never hoped to eat a single date except as guests or by a purchase."¹

"The two clans of Yathrib," writes Ibn Khaldun, "dominated over the Jews and were distinguished because of their prestige and eminence. The tribe of Mudar, which was just around the vicinity, was cognate with them."² Ibn 'Abd-I-Rabbehi, another Arab historian, writes in the *Al-'Iqd al-Farid*; "The Ansar descended from the tribe of Azd. Known as Aus and Khazraj, they were lineal descendants of the two sons of Haritha b. 'Amr b. Amir. Being more proud and dignified than others, they had never paid tribute to any regime or supremacy."³

They were related, on the material side, to the Banu 'Adiy b. al-Najjar who had given one of their daughters, Salma bint 'Amr, to Hashim in marriage. To Hashim she bore 'Abdul Muttalib, but Hashim, however, left the boy with his mother in Yathrib where he was brought up and was taken to Mecca by his uncle after he had grown up into a youth. These blood relationships, which were the adhesive elements in tribal organization, cannot be ignored since kinship played an important role in the social life of the Arabs. On reaching Madina, the Apostle stayed with Abu Ayyub Ansari who belonged to Banu 'Adiy b. al-Najjar.

Aus and Khazraj traced back their roots from Qahtan while Muhajirrin and other Muslims hailing from Mecca or other places close to it claimed their descent from 'Adnan. Thus, after the Apostle migrated to Madina and the Ansar pledged their support to him, both the 'Adnan and Qahtan had been at odds with one

¹ Ibn Hisham, Vol. II, p. 289

² Tarikh Ibn Khaldun, Vol. II, p. 289

³ *Al-'Iqd ul-Farid*, Vol. III, p. 334

another during the pre-Islamic times but they were banded together in Madina and thus the pagan passions of blood and clan, of vanity and pride and of contemptuous self-conceit were abolished by the wholesome influence of Islam.

For all these causes and considerations as well as for its strategic location, Madina was the fittest place to be selected for the emigration of the Apostle and his companions as it was eminently suited to be made the radiating center of Islam until it gained enough strength to prevail over the Peninsula and charged the whole country with a new spirit of virtue and godliness.

EXPANSION OF ISLAM IN MADINA

The teachings of Islam were so glowing that the people of the Aus and the Khazraj, awakened to interest, quickly attested their faith in Islam. S'ad b. Mu'adh was the first to embrace it, then Usayd b. Hudayr, the leader of Bani 'Abdul Ash'hal, a clan of Aus followed suit. The wise and courteous stance of Mus'ab b. Umayr, together with the proper manner in which he presented Islam to them, convinced these people of the truth that is Islam. Then the remaining clansmen of Bani 'Abdul Ash'al were led to accept the faith such that shortly thereafter, there was not a house of the Ansar in which a man or a woman had not given his or her faith to Islam.¹

THE SECOND PLEDGE OF 'AQABA

In the next year, during Haj, Mus'ab b. Umayr went back to Mecca with a number of Ansar Muslims and other polytheists of Madina. After the Ansar had performed their pilgrimage, the Apostle met them at the previous year's meeting place late in the middle of the night. At this time, there were seventy-three of them, including two women. The Apostle of God came accompanied by his Uncle, 'Abbas b. 'Abdul Muttalib, who had still not embraced Islam.

The Apostle talked to them, read some of the Qur'an and invited

¹ Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 436-38

them to accept Islam. Then he said, "I invite your allegiance on a condition that you would protect me in the same way as you would your women and children." They gave allegiance to the Apostle but demanded that he would not leave them nor return to his own people. The Prophet then said in reply, "I am of you and you are of me. I will war against them that make war upon you and have peace with those that keep peace with you."

Thereafter the Apostle selected twelve of them, nine from the Khazraj and three from the Aus, as their leaders.¹

PERMISSION TO MIGRATE TO MADINA

Thanks to the allegiance and support offered by the Ansar, for the Muslims found a new rock of refuge. The Apostle commanded the Muslims in Mecca to migrate and join their brothers-in-faith, the Ansar, in Madina. He told his companions, "God has provided to you some brethren and homes where you will live in safety." So the Muslims destined themselves in batches from Mecca to Yathrib, leaving the apostle behind in Mecca in anticipation of the command of Allah as to when he should leave the city.

But it was not easy to emigrate as the Quraysh decided at once to take stringent measures against them. The pagan Quraysh did everything they could to stop the exodus such as creating obstacles along the way of the emigrants to prevent their departure, but the Muslims were equally determined not to reconsider their plans. Bent on leaving Mecca at all cost, some, like Abu Salama, had departed alone leaving their wives and children, while others, like Suhayb, had to give up their lifelong earnings before leaving Mecca. Umm Salama relates:

"When Abu Salama had made up his mind to set out for Madina, he saddled his camel and mounted me on it with my son Salama. Then, taking hold of the camel's halter, he went ahead. When some of the men belonging to Bani al-Mughari saw him, they came near us saying, "It is alright so far as you are concerned, but how can we allow your wife to go with you?" They snatched the camel's

¹ Ibid., pp. 441-42

headstall from his hand and took me with them. At this crucial point, Banu 'Abdul Asad, the clansmen of Abu Salama, got angry. They said: 'By God, you have torn her from our brother, but we will not allow our son to go with her.' A scuffle started between them for the child Salama, until his arm was dislocated, and Bani Asad took him away leaving me with Bani al-Mughira while my husband went away to Madina. Thus, all the three of us -- my self, my husband and my son were separated. I used to go out every morning to Abtah weeping till nightfall. A whole year passed in this manner when one of my cousins from Al-Mughira took pity on me and said to Bani al-Mughira: "Why don't you let this poor woman go? You have separated her from her husband and son." So they said to me: "You can go to your husband if you like." Then Banu Asad reunited me with my son. I saddled my camel and taking the child with me, set out for Madinah in search of my husband accompanied by not a blessed soul with me. When I arrived at Tan'im I happened to meet 'Uthman b. Talha¹ of Bani 'Abdul-Dar who asked me where I intended to go. I replied that I was going to my husband in Medina. He asked if I had anybody with me to which I said in reply, 'None save this child and God.' He said, 'By God, it is not easy for you to reach your destination'. He took hold of the camel's rope and went ahead leading it. By God, I have never met a man nobler than he. Whenever we had to make a halt, he used to kneel the camel and withdraw; after I had got down, he used to unload the camel, tie it to a tree and go away to take rest under a tree. In the evening, he used to saddle the camel and load it, and then withdrew asking me to ride; he came back after I had mounted and taking the halter in his hand, he went ahead to the next destination... thus he escorted me until I reached Madina. When he saw Quba, the habitation of Bani 'Amr b.'Auf, he said, 'Your husband is in this village. Now go to him with the blessing of God.'" Thus he bade me farewell and went off on his way back to Mecca."

She also used to say that no family in Islam suffered the hardships

¹ 'Uthman b. Talha embraced Islam after the conquest of Mecca when the Apostle handed over the keys of the Ka'ba to him (Al Isabah fi Tamiz is Sahaba, p. 217)

the way that the family of Abu Salama¹ did.

When Suhayb tried to leave for Madina, the disbelieving Quraysh said to him, "You came to us as a destitute beggar and have grown rich among us, and now you want to go away safely with your life and wealth. By God, it shall never be so!" Suhayb asked, "would you allow me to go if I give my property to you?" When they replied in the affirmative, Suhayb said, "I will give you the whole of it."

When the Apostle was told about the incident, he exclaimed, "Suhayb has made a profit! Suhayb has made a profit!"²

The emigrants to Medina during this period were 'Umar, Talha, Hamza, Zayd b. Haritha,' Abdur Rahman b. Auf, Zubayr b. al-Awwam, Abu Hudhayafa, 'Uthman b.' Affan and several other companions of the Prophet. Thereafter, the emigrants trickled away one by one. The only ones left in Mecca, besides the Apostle, Abu Bakr and 'Ali were either those who are detained because of some restraints or those who had fallen victims of their own shortcomings.³

UNSUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE APOSTLE

The migration of Muslims to Madina frightened the Meccans out of their wits. For no sooner did they realize that the Apostle had already established a base with a large number of adherents in a foreign territory beyond their reach, and if he were also join them there, then they would be rendered helpless, deprived of all authority over him. They held a council in Dar al-Nadwa⁴ where all the chiefs of the Quraysh had assembled to deliberate on the possible solutions of the problem.

They debated and scrutinized the various suggestions and ultimately decided unanimously that each clan should provide young, courageous and blue-blooded warrior so that all of them fall upon Muhammad (peace be upon him) to jointly kill him.

¹ Ibn Kathir, Vol. II, pp. 215-17

² Ibn Kathir, Vol. II, p. 223

³ Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 470-79

⁴ The House of Qusayy b. Kilab where they used to decide every important affair.

Thus, the responsibility of shedding his blood would lie equally on all the clans, and no single clan whatsoever would then be held responsible for it and 'Abdu Munaf for sure, would not dare take up a hatchet against all the people. Determined to slay the Apostle, the pagans dispersed to execute their treacherous scheme.

But the Apostle was warned of their wicked plan by the All-Knowing God and thus, had asked 'Ali instead to lie on his bed and wrap himself in his mantle, assuring the latter no harm would come to him.

The shrewd and determined gang stood outside the Apostle's house with drawn scimitars in their hands prepared to attack the Prophet. The Apostle of God came out and took a handful of dust. God instantly took away their sight and the Apostle went through their ranks, sprinkling the dust over their heads and reciting the Surah Ya Sin - 'And we have set a bar before them and a bar behind them, and (thus) have covered them so that they see not.' (Qur'an 36:9) He went through them but nobody was able to see him.

Then, there came a man who asked them, "What are you waiting for?" When they replied that they were waiting for Muhammad (peace be upon him), he said, "May God confound you! He has already gone away." They peeped through the chink of the door and saw 'Ali sleeping on the bed wrapped in the Apostle's mantle. They took him for the Prophet and decided to wait till morning when 'Ali got up from the bed. All of them were now put to shame.¹

PROPHET'S MIGRATION TO MEDINA

The Apostle came to Abu Bakr and told him that God had given him permission to migrate from Mecca. Abu Bakr exclaimed, "Together, O Apostle of God?"; for he was anxious to keep him company." Then Abu Bakr presented two dromedaries he had been keeping in time for the purpose. 'Abdallah b. Urayqit was

¹ Ibn Hisham, Vol. Pp. 480-83

hired by Abu Bakr to act as a guide.

THE STRANGE INCONSISTENCY

The unbelieving Quraysh of Mecca were bitterly set against the Apostle. Yet they were absolutely convinced of his truthfulness and trustworthiness, nobility and magnanimity. If anybody in Mecca apprehended loss or misappropriation of his property, he usually deposited it with the Apostle. The Apostle had thus a number of things committed to his care. He, therefore, charged 'Ali to return these to their owners before leaving Mecca. Of a fact, such a square dealing at this critical moment is a strange commentary on the nobility of the prophet as well as the callousness thus clarified by God.

"We know well how their talk grieveth thee, though in truth they deny not thee (Muhammad) but evil-doers flout the revelations of Allah." (Qur'an 6:33)

MORAL LESSON BROUGHT ABOUT BY MIGRATION

The migration of the Prophet illustrates the principle that everything howsoever coveted by one, ought to be sacrificed for the sake of one's faith or ideal. Worldly estate and effects or any other thing that a man is disposed to value can never take the place of his faith nor can the faith be bartered away for the entire world.

Mecca was the birthplace of the Apostle. As the homeland of the Apostle of God and his companions, it must have had an attraction for all of them. Then, it had also the house of God, loved and adored by them like the light of one's eye but nothing stood in the way of bidding farewell to their hearts and homes, families and kinsmen. This was due to the fact that the pagans of Mecca would not allow them the freedom of conscience and liberty to practice their faith.

The Prophet loved Mecca but he also loved his faith: one was a natural feeling of affection and the other an insatiable thirst of soul. We find the two tenderest feelings of human nature articulately expressed by the Apostle while leaving Mecca.

“What a nice city thou art and how ardently I love thee. Had my people not exiled me, I would have never settled anywhere save in the city.”¹

The Apostle had, in truth and reality, to leave his homeland in quest of the divine command.

“O my bondmen who believe! Lo! My earth is spacious. Therefore serve Me only.” (Qur’an 29:56)

TOWARDS THE CAVE OF MT. THAWR

The Apostle and Abu Bakr stealthily proceeded to the cave of Mt. Thawr. Abu Bakr instructed his son ‘Abdallah to find out the hostile plans and conversations of the Meccans concerning them and then relay these to him. Furthermore, he asked Amir b. Fuhayrah, his slave, to feed his flocks of milch ewe by the day and bring food for them in the evening. Asma, his daughter, used to bring food for them at night.

MIRACLE OF LOVE

The flame of love is the light of Heaven that illuminates the soul. It has been, eversince the creation of this world, the most ardent passion of human heart, advising, directing and guiding man along the right path in moments of danger. It is like the worried expression of one mad about something, for the innermost instinct of such a man is never remiss and is able to perceived even the slightest danger to his greedily desired object. Such were the feelings of Abu Bakr about the Apostle of God during this journey. It is related that when the Apostle set out for the cave on Mt. Thawr, Abu Bakr sometimes went ahead of the Apostle and then behind him, until the apostle noticed his restlessness and asked, Abubakr, what’s the matter? Often you come behind me and sometimes you go ahead!” Abu Bakr replied, “O Apostle of

¹ Tirmidhi, Chap. Fadl Mecca

God, when I think of those pursuing you, I come behind you but then I apprehend an ambuscade so that I go in front of you.”¹

When the two arrived at the cave on Mt. Thawr, Abu Bakr requested the Apostle to wait until he had searched and cleaned up the cave. So, he went in, explored it and came out after cleaning up. Then he remembered that he had not properly searched one hole. He again asked the Apostle to wait a bit and went in to search it for the second time around, and only then did he allow the Apostle go into the cave after he had fully satisfied himself that it did not harbor wild beasts or reptiles.²

THE CELESTIAL ASSISTANCE

After the two companions had entered the cave, a spider spun its web across the mouth of the cave on a bush at the entrance, concealing the Apostle from those who might look into it. Thereafter came two doves which hovered over the cave for some time and then sat down to lay eggs there - Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth (Qur'an 48:7)

THE MOST CRITICAL MOMENT OF HUMAN HISTORY

The most critical moment of the world's history, when the fate of mankind hanged by a thread, drew near as the Qurayshite horsemen on the look out for the two fugitives galloping over the desert came to the cave where the two had secluded themselves. The world was on a standstill, holding its breath in suspense: would a dark and disastrous future lie ahead for humanity or was it to take the most favorable turn? The pursuers, who stood debating among themselves at the mouth of the cave by virtue of the eggs and the spider's web, resolved that nobody could be inside it.

One may think it is fantastic or miraculous but it was how God helped His Apostle.

¹ Ibn Kathir, *Albidayah wan Nihayah*, Vol. III, p. 180 (on the authority of 'Umar b. al-Khattab)

² Ibid.

“Then Allah caused His peace of reassurance to descend upon him and supported him with host ye cannot see.” (Qur’an 9:40)

LO! ALLAH IS WITH US

Peeringly, Abu Bakr looked over his head. He saw the blood-thirsty warriors of the Quraysh standing at the mouth of the cave. Then he said to his companion with a trembling heart, “O Apostle of God, they will see us if anybody steps forward.” “What misgivings have you,” replied the Apostle, “about the two with whom the third is Allah?”¹ It was as if to remind that at this event, the revelation came down from God:

“When they two were in the cave, when he said to his comrade: grieve not, Lo! Allah is with us.” (Qur’an 9:40)

SURAQA FOLLOWS UP THE APOSTLE

The Quraysh offered a reward of one hundred camels to anyone who brought back the Apostle, dead or alive. On the other hand, the Apostle spent three nights in the cave and then guided by ‘Amir b. Fuhayrah went along the road by the sea-coast. Suraqa b. Malik b. Ju’shum heard of the price set by the Quraysh on the head of the Apostle and hurried after him. The reward of hundred camels was too much for him that he got up on his mare and went after fugitives tracking their footstep. He let his mare run swiftly until he nearly over-took the fugitives. But, lo, his mare stumbled abruptly, and hitherto, he was thrown off. He rose up, composed himself, and remounted the mare, and let her go ahead. Once more, the mare stumbled and he was again thrown off, but nevertheless continued the chase until he could see the three men going ahead. Suddenly, his mare stumbled for the third time, its fore-legs sinking up to the knees on the ground, and he was thrown off once again. He also saw dust rising from the ground like a sandstorm.

Suraqa was now convinced that the Apostle was protected against

¹ Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Tafsir

him and he would not in any case triumph over the latter. He called out saying that he was Suraqa b. Ju'shum and that he would not inflict any harm to them. The Apostle ordered Abu Bakr to ask him what he wants from them. Suraqa replied, "write for me a warrant of security." Thereupon the Apostle ordered 'Amir b. Fuhayrah to write the warrant which he wrote on a piece of tanned leather or bone. Suraqa preserved the document for long as a memorial.¹

A PREDICTION

The apostle of God had been driven out of his homeland, and the enemy pursuing him was after his blood, but his mind's eye was envisioning the day when his followers would be trampling the realms of Ceasars and Chosroes. In those adverse circumstances, the darkest hour of his life, he made a prediction of the bright times ahead. To Suraqa he said, "Suraqa, how would you feel when you would put on Chosroes' bracelets?"

God has indeed promised succor, victory and prosperity to His Apostle and the triumphant ascendancy of His Religion of Truth.

"He it is who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religions, however much the disbelievers may averse." (Qur'an 9:33)

Those who cannot see beyond the material agency of causes and effects would shrug their shoulders at this prediction: the Quraysh discarded the forebodings of the Apostle as incredulous and inconceivable, but the foreseeing Apostle was peeping into the future:

"Lo! Allah faileth not to keep the tryst." (Qur'an 13:31)

And the events took shape exactly in the same way as the Apostle had foretold Suraqa. When Persia was conquered and the tiara,

¹ Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 489-90; Bukhari, Chap. Hijratun Nabi

robe and the bracelets of Chosroes were brought to ‘Umar, he sent for Suraqa and asked him to put on the royal dress.¹

Suraqa took the warrant of security for he was by then convinced of the victory of the Prophet. He offered some provisions and utensils, but the Apostle accepted nothing from him. He simply said to Suraqa, “Keep our whereabouts secret.”

THE BEST HOST

Abu Bakr and the Apostle passed by the tent of Umm M’abad, a woman of Khuza’a, who had milk ewe but its udder had dried up owing to drought. God’s Messenger wiped its udder with his hand and mentioning the name of God the most High, he prayed that Umm M’abad might have a blessing in her ewe. It then gave a flow of milk. He first gave Umm M’abad and others a drink until all of them were fully satisfied, then he drank knowing everyone was thru. He milked it the second time, and when the vessel was full, left it with her. When Abu M’abad came back and his wife told him about the prodigious happening and the angelic stranger, he replied, “By God, he appears to be the same man of the Quraysh whom they are prowling after.”

They continued their journey with the guide until they reached Quba in the vicinity of Madina. This was Monday, the 12th day of Rabi ul-Awwal. (24th September, 622 A.D.) A new era was indeed beginning, because it was from the start of this year that the Islamic calendar of Hijra took its origin.

¹ Al-Isti’ah, Vol. II, p. 597

YATHRIB BEFORE ISLAM

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MECCAN AND MEDINITE SOCIETIES

Yathrib had been marked by Providence to shelter the Messenger of God (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) after his migration and to bring forth not only the first Islamic Society but also to serve as a focal point for the universal call of Islam. The great honor accorded to the city makes it necessary to know its distinctive features, such as its physical, social and cultural conditions, the Arab tribes living there and their mutual relations, the economic and political manipulations of the Jews and their fighting spirit as well as the way of life sustained by its fertile land. Various religions, cultures and communities flourished in the city tremendously, in contrast with Mecca, which was dominated by one faith and one cultural pattern. The details given here, albeit briefly, depict the state of affairs in Madina when the Apostle made his debut in that city.

THE JEWS

The view preferred by historians about Jewish settlements in Arabia, at large, and those in Madina, in particular, is that they date from the first century A.D. Dr. Israel Wellphenson writes that:

After Palestine and Jerusalem were laid waste in 70 A.D. and the Jews dispersed to different parts of the world, a number of them made their way to Arabia. This in accordance with the Jewish historian Josephus, who was himself present at the siege of Jerusalem and had led the Jewish units on several occasions. Arab sources also corroborate his statement.

Three Jewish tribes, Qaynuqa, an-Nadir and Qurayza, were settled in Madina. The number of adults belonging to these tribes was over two thousand. Qaynuqa was estimated to have seven hundred combatants, with an-Nadir having almost the same number too, while the grown ups of Qurayza were reported to be between seven and nine hundred.¹

These tribes were not on good terms with one another and very often they came to blows. Dr. Israel Wellphenson says:

Bani Qaynuqa were set against the rest of the Jews because they had sided with Bani Khazraj in the battle of Bu'ath in which Bani an-Nadir and Bani Qurayza had inflicted a crushing defeat and massacred Bani Qaynuqa even though the latter had paid bloodwit for the prisoners of war. The bitterness among the Jewish tribes continued to persist after the battle of Bu'ath. When Bani Qaynuqa subsequently fell out with the Ansar, no other Jewish tribe came to their aid against them (Ansar).²

The Qur'an also makes a reference to the mutual discord between the Jews:

*“And when We made with you a covenant (saying): Shed not the blood of your people nor turn (party of) your people out of your dwellings. Then you ratified (Our covenant) and you were witnesses (thereto).
Yet it is you who slay each other and drive out party of your*

¹ These figures are based one of the number of Jews of Different tribes given by the biographers like Ibn Hisham in connection with the exile of Bani An-Nadir, the punishment of Bani Qurayza, etc. Bani Qaynuqa, an-Nadir and Qurayza were the chief tribes consisting of several clans as, for example, Bani Badhal was a clan allied to Bani Qurayza. A number of persons belonging to this clan who accepted Islam were eminent companions. Bani Zanba was another branch of Bani an-Najjar, Bani Saïda, Bani Th'alaba, Bani Jafna, Bani al Harith etc. have been mentioned in the treaty made by the Apostle with the Jews. After mentioning these tribes the treaty says, “The chiefs and friends of the Jews are as themselves.” Samhudi says in *Wafa-ul-Wafa* that the Jews were divided into more than twenty clans.

² Al-Yahud fi Balad il-Arab

people from their homes, supporting one another against them by sin and transgression—and if they come to you as captives you would ransom them, whereas their expulsion was itself unlawful for you (Qur'an 2:84-5).

The Jews of Madina had their dwellings in their own separate localities in different parts of the city. When Bani an-Nadir and Bani Qurayza forced Bani Qaynuqa to vacate their settlement in the outskirts of the town, they took up their quarters in a section of the city. Bani an-Nadir had their habitation in the higher parts, some four or five kilometers from the city, towards the valley of Bathan, which housed some of the richest groves and agricultural lands of Madina. The third Jewish tribe, Bani Qurayza, occupied a vicinity known as Mehzor, which is a few kilometers to the south of the city.¹

The Jews of Medina lived in compact settlements where they had erected fortifications and citadels. They were, however, not independent but lived as confederate clans of the stronger Arab tribes, which guaranteed them immunity from raids by the nomads. Predatory incursions by the nomadic tribes being a perpetual menace, the Jewish tribes had to continually seek the protection of one or the other chieftains of the powerful Arab tribes.²

RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF THE JEWS

The Jews considered themselves to be blessed with divine religion and law. They had their own seminaries, known as Midras which imparted instruction in their religious and secular science, law, history and Talmudic lore. Similarly, for offering prayers and performing other religious rites, they had synagogues where they normally came together to discuss their

¹ Dr. Mohammad Syed al-Tantawi, *Banu Israel fil Qur'an wal-Sunnah*, p. 77

² Dr. Jawwad 'Ali, *Tarikh al-'Arab Qabl al-Islam*, (Baghdad), Vol. VII, p. 23.

affairs. They observed the laws brought about by the Pentateuch together with the many other rigid and uncompromising customary rules imposed by their priests and rabbis, and celebrated Jewish feasts and fasts. For example, they kept, on the tenth day of the month of Tishri, the fast of the Atonement.³

FINANCES

The financial relationship of the Medinite Jews with the other tribes was mainly limited to lending money on interest or on security or sequestration of personal property upon payment failure. In an agricultural region like Madina, there was ample scope for a money-lending business since the farmers very often needed capital for purposes of cultivation.¹

The system of lending money was not limited merely to pledging personal property as security for repayment of the loan, for the lenders often forced the borrowers to pledge even their women and children. The incident relating to the murder of Ka'b b. Ashraf, narrated by Bukhari, bears testimony to the prevailing practices:

Muhammad b. Maslamah said to Ka'b, "Now, we hope that you will lend us a camel-load or two (of food)." Ka'b answered, "I will do so (but) you must pledge something with me." [The Muslims] retorted, "What do you want?" (Ka'b) replied, "Pledge your women with me". Then they responded, "How can we pledge our women with you, the most beautiful of the Arabs?" Ka'b parried, "Then pledge your sons with me." [The Muslims] countered, "How can we pledge our sons with you, when later they would be abused on this account, and people would say, 'They had been pledged for a camel-load or two (of food)!' This

³ *Bani Israel fil-Qur'an wal-Sunnah*, pp. 80-81

¹ *Bani Israel fil-Qur'an wal-Sunnah*, pp. 80-81

would disgrace us! We shall, however, pledge our armour with you.”²

Such transactions produced, naturally enough, hatred and repugnance between the mortgagees and the mortgagors, particularly since the Arabs were known to be sensitive where the honor of their womenfolk is concerned.

Concentration of capital in the hands of the Jews had given them power to exercise economic pressure on the social economy of the city. The stock markets were at their mercy. They rigged the market through hoarding, thereby creating artificial shortages and causing rises and falls in prices. Most of the people in Medina detested the Jews owing to these foul practices, usury and profiteering, which were against the substance of the common Arabs.¹

With their instinctive tendency of avarice, the Jews were bound to follow an expansionist policy as pointed out by De Lacy O’ Leary in the *Arabia before Muhammad*,

In the seventh century, there was a strong feeling between these Bedwin² and the Jewish colonies because the latter, by extending their agricultural area, were encroaching upon the land which Bedwins regarded as their own pastures.³

The Jews, being driven by nothing but their haughty cupidity and selfishness in their social transactions with the Arab tribes, Aus and Khazraj, spent lavishly, though judiciously, in creating a rift between the two tribes. On a number of occasions in the

² Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Maghazi, See Qatl K’ab b. Ashraf

¹ *Banu Israel fil-Qur’an wal-Sunnah*, p. 79

² Dr. Lacy O’ Leary means the Aus Khazraj and other Arab Tribes living in the neighbourhood of Medina.

³ *Arabia before Mohammad*, p. 174

past, they had successfully pitted one tribe against the other, leaving both tribes worn out and economically ruined. The only objective Jews had set before themselves was how to maintain their economic dominion over Medina.

For many centuries, the Jews had been waiting for a redeemer. This belief of the Jews in the coming prophet, about which they used to talk with the Arabs, had prepared the Aus and the Khazraj to give their faith readily to the Apostle.⁴

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS

The Jews of Arabia spoke Arabic although their dialect was interspersed with Hebrew, for they had not completely given up their religious purposes. In regard to the missionary activities of the Jews, Dr. Israel Wellphenson says:

There is less uncertainty about the opportunities offered to the Jews in consolidating their religious supremacy over Arabia. Had they so wished, they could have used their influence to their best advantage. But as it is too well known to every student of the history of the Jews, they have never made any effort to invite other nations to embrace their faith, rather, for certain reasons, they have been forbidden to preach this to others.¹

Be that as it may, many of the Aus and the Khazraj and certain other Arab tribes had been Judaized owing to their close social connections with the Jews or ties of blood. Thus, there were Jews in Arabia, who were of Israelite descent, with an addition of Arab converts. The well-known poet Ka'b b. Ashraf (often called an an-Nadir) belonged to the tribe of Tayy. His father had married in the tribe of Bani an-Nadir but he grew up to be a

⁴ Dr. Mohammad Syed Al-Tantawi, *Banu Israel fil-Qur'an wal-Sunnah*, pp. 73-101

¹ Dr. Israel Wellphenson, *Al-Yahud fil Balad il-Arab*, p. 72

zealous Jew. Ibn Hisham writes about him, “Ka’b b. Ashraf who was one of the Tayy of the sub-section of Bani Nabhan whose mother was from the Bani al-Nadir.”²

There was a custom among the pagan Arabs that if the sons of anybody died in infancy, he used to declare to God that if his next son remained alive, he would entrust him to a Jew for bringing him up on his own religion. A tradition referring to this custom finds place in the *Sunan Abu Dawud*:

“Ibn ‘Abbas said: Any woman whose children died used to take the vow that if her next child remained alive, she would make him a Jew. Accordingly, when Banu an-Nadir were deported they had the sons of Ansar with them; they said, ‘We will not forsake our sons.’ Thereupon the revelation came: ‘There is no compulsion in religion.’”³

AUS AND KHARAJ

The two great Arab tribes of Madina, Aus and Kharaj, traced a common descent from the tribe of Azd belonging to Yemen from where successive waves of emigrants inundated the northern regions from time to time. The exodus was brought about by a variety of reasons, some of which were the unstable political conditions in Yemen, Abyssinian aggression and the disruption of the irrigation system supporting agriculture after the destruction of the Ma’rib Dam. However, both the Aus and Khazraj came down to Madina after the Jews. The Aus settled down in ‘Awali, an area in the south-east of Madina while the Khazraj occupied the lands in the central and northern parts of the city. With the northern part of the city being low-lying, nothing intervened between the habitation of the Khazraj and Harrata Wabrah in the West.

² Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 514

³ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Kitab-ulJihad, Vol. II

The Khazraj consisted of four clans: Malik, 'Adiy, Mazin and Dinar, all collaterals to Banu Najjar, and also known as Taym Al-Lat. Banu Najjar took up residence in the central part of the city, where now stands the Prophet's mosque. The Aus, having settled in the fertile, arable lands were the neighbours of the more influential and powerful Jewish tribe. The lands occupied by Khazraj were comparatively less fertile and they had only Banu Qaynuqa as their neighbours.¹

It is rather difficult to reckon the numerical strength of Aus and Khazraj with any amount of certainty, but an estimate can be formed from different battles in which they took part after the Apostle's emigration to Madina. The combatants drafted from these two tribes on the occasion of the conquest of Mecca numbered four thousand.²

When the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) migrated to Madina, the Arabs were powerful and in a position to play the first fiddle. The Jews being disunited had taken a subordinate position by seeking alliance either with the Aus or the Khazraj. Their mutual relationship was even worse for they were more tyrannical to their comrades in religion in times of clashes than to the Arabs themselves. It was due to the antipathy and bitterness between them that the Bani Qaynuqa were forced to abandon their cultivated lands and resorted to working as artisans.¹

The Aus and the Khazraj, too, often fell into disputes. The first of these encounters was the battle of Samyr while the last, the battle of Bu'ath, was fought five years before the Hijrah.⁴ The

¹ *Makkahwal Madinah*, p. 311

² *Al-Imta*, Vol. I, p. 364

¹ *Makkahwal Madinah*, p. 322

⁴ *Fath-ul-Bari*, Vol. VII, p. 85. See Ibn Kathir for the detailed account of the battle of Bu'ath

Jews always tried to sow dissension between the Aus and Khazraj and made them run foul of one another so as to divert their attention from them. The Arab tribes were conscious of their nefarious activities: "the fox" was the popular nickname they had given to the Jew.

An incident related by Ibn Hisham, on the authority of Ibn Is'haq, sheds light upon the character of the Jews. Sh'ath b. Qays was a Jew, old and bitter against the Muslims. He passed by a place where a number of the Apostle's companions from Aus and Khazraj were talking together. He was filled with rage seeing their amity and unity. So he asked the Jewish youth friendly with the Ansars to join them and mention the battle of Bu'ath and the preceding battles, and to recite some of the poems concerning those events in order to stir up their tribal sentiments.

The cunning device of Sh'ath was not in vain, for later on the two tribes had been at daggers drawn in the past. Their passions were aroused and they started bragging and quarreling until they were about to unsheathe their swords when the Apostle came with some of the Muhajirins. He pacified them and appealed to their bonds of harmony brought about by Islam. Then the Ansars realized that the enemy had duped them. The Aus and Khazraj wept, embraced and welcomed back one another as if nothing had happened.¹

PHYSICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONDITIONS

At the time the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) migrated to Yathrib, the city was divided into distinct sections inhabited by the Arabs and the Jews, with a separate district allocated to each clan. Each division consisted of the residential quarters and the soil used for agricultural purposes

¹ Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 555-6

while in another part they used to have their strongholds or fortress-like structures.² They had such fifty-nine strongholds in Madina.³ Dr. Israel Wellphenson writes about these strongholds:

The fortresses were of great importance in Yathrib for the people belonging to a clan took shelter in them during raids by the enemy. They afforded protection to the women and children who retreated to them in times of clashes and forays while the men went out to engage with the enemy. These strongholds were also utilized as warehouses for the storage of food-grains and fruits as the enemy could easily pilfer them if left in the open places. Goods and arms were also kept in such citadels and caravans carrying the merchandise used to halt near them for the markets were usually held along the doors of these fortifications. The same bulwarks also housed the synagogues and educational institutions known as Midras.⁴ The costly goods which were stored in the fortresses show that the religious scriptures were also kept in them. Jewish leaders and chieftains used to assemble in these fortresses for consultations or for taking decisions on important issues which were usually sealed by taking an oath on the scripture.¹

Defining the word *Utum*, as these fortresses were called, Dr. Wellphenson writes,

the term connotes, in Hebrew, to shut out or to obstruct. When it is used in connection with a wall it denotes such windows as are shut down from outside that can be

² *Al-Yahud fil Balad il-Arab*, p. 116

³ Al-Samhudi, *Wafa-ul-wafa' fi Akhbar ul-Mustafa*, Vol. P. 116.

⁴ An abbreviation of Bet ha-Midras, signifying house of study or the place where students of the law gathered to listen to Midrash. Used in contradiction to the Bet ha-Sefer i.e. the primary school attended by children under the age of thirteen years to learn the scriptures, it goes without saying that the Jews of Medina had higher institutions of learning. (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, Art. "Bet ha-Midras").

¹ *Al-Yahud fi balad il-Arab*, pp. 116-117

opened from inside. The word is also reflective of a defensive wall or rampart and with that, it is safe to presume that *Utum* was the name given by the Jews to their fortresses. They had shutters which could be closed from the outer side and opened from the inner side.

Yathrib was, thus, a cluster of such strongholds or fortified suburbs which had taken the shape of a town because of their proximity. The Qur'an also hints to this peculiar feature of the city in these words:

“That which Allah gives as spoil to His messenger from the people of the township” (Qur'an 59:7).

Again, another reference to Medina signifies the same peculiarity:

“They will not fight against you in a body save in fortified villages or from behind walls” (Qur'an 59:14).

Lava plains occupy a place of special importance in the physical geography of Madina. These plains, formed by the matter flowing from a volcano which cools into rocks of burnt basalt of dark brown and black color and of irregular shape and size, stretch out far and wide, and cannot be traversed either by foot or even on horses or camels. Two of these lava plains are more extensive; one is to the east and is known as Harrat Waqim, while the other lies in the west and is called Harrat Wabarah. Majduddin Firozabadi writes in the *Al-Maghanim al-Matabata fi Ma'alim ut-Tabbah* that there are several lava plains surrounding Medina. The two lava plains of the east and west have virtually made the city a fortified refuge that can be attacked only from the north (where ditches were dug on the occasion of the battle of the trenches). On the southern side, the oases thickets and clumped date-palm groves as well as intertiered house of the densely populated area defend the city

against incursion by an enemy.¹ The strategic location of Madina was one of the factors responsible for its selection as the émigré's new home.

Harrata Waqim, which is located east of the city and is arrayed with numerous verdant oases, was more populous than Harrata Wabarah. When the Apostle emigrated to Yathrib, the more influential Jewish tribes, like Banu an-Nadir and Banu Qurayza, were living in Harrata Waqim along with some of the important clans of Aus, such as, Banu 'Abdul Ash'hal, Banu Haritha and Banu Mu'awiya. The eastern lava plain was thus named Waqim because of a locality of the same name in the district occupied by Bani 'Abdul Ash'hal.²

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

By and large, the inhabitants of Madina followed the Quraish whom they held to be the guardians of the Holy sanctuary and the matrix of their religious creed as well as social ethics. Pagan like other Arabs, the population of Madina was, by and large, devotees of the same idols as worshipped by the inhabitants of Hijaz, and of Mecca in particular, in addition to a few regional or tribal deities considered to be the personal or private gods of these clans. Thus, Manat was the oldest and the most popular deity of the populace of Madina whereby Aus and Khazraj rendered honor to it as the copartner of God. The idol was set up on the seashore, between Mecca and Madina, at Mushallal near Qudayd. Al-Lat was the favorite god of the people of Ta'if while the Quraishites revered al-Uzza as their national deity. It was so because the people of every place had a particular patron-god to which they used to be emotionally attached. If anybody in Madina had a wooden replica of an idol, he normally called it Manat, as was the idol kept in his house by 'Amr b.

¹ *Al-Maghanim al-Matabata fi Ma'alim ut-Tabbah*, pp. 108-114.

² Dr. Muhammad Husain Haikal, *Manzal-al-Wahy*, p. 557

Jamuh, the chief of Bani Salama in Medina, a thing that he had known before his conversion to Islam.¹

Ahmad b. Hanbal related a tradition from ‘Urwa, on the authority of ‘Aisha, which says that: “The Ansar used to cry *labbaik*² to Manat and worship it near Mushallal before accepting Islam. And anyone who performed pilgrimage in its (Manat) name did not consider it lawful to round the mounts of Safa and Marwa.³ Thus the people once inquired from the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), “O Messenger of Allah, we felt some hesitation during the pagan past in going round Safa and Marwah.” God then sent down the revelation, “Lo! As-Safa and al-Marwah are amongst the indications of Allah” (Qur’an 2:158).

However, we are not aware of any other idol in Medina equally glamorized as al-Lat, Manat, al-Uzza and Hubal or venerated like them, nor was there any idol set up in Medina which was paid a visit by the people from other tribes. Medina does not appear to have been bristling with idols unlike Mecca where one used to set up an idol in every house and the vendors offered them for the sake of the pilgrims. Mecca was, all in all, the prototype and symbol of idolatry in Arabia whereas Medina simply trailed behind it.

In Madina, the people used to have two days on which they engaged in games. When the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to Madina, he said to them, “God has substituted something better for you, the day of sacrifice and the day of breaking the fast.”⁴ Certain commentators of the Traditions hold the view that the two festivals celebrated by the

¹ Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi, *Bulugh al-‘Arab fi Ma’arafata Ahwa al-‘Arab*, Vol. I, p. 346 and Vol. II, p. 208.

² Lit. “At Your service.”

³ A few more Traditions have been related by other companions in this connection.

⁴ *Bulugh al-‘Arab*.

people of Medina were Nawroz and Mehrjan, which had perhaps been taken over by them from the Persians.¹

Aus and Khazraj came of a lineage whose nobility was acknowledge even by the Quraish. Ansars were descendants of Banu Qahtan belonging to the southern stock of 'Arab 'Arbah, with whom the Quraish had marital affinity. Hashim b. 'Abdu Manaf had married Salama bint 'Amr b. Zayd of the Banu Adiy b. al-Najjar, which was a clan of Khazraj. Nevertheless, the Quraish considered their own ancestry to be nobler than those of the Arab clans of Medina. On the day of the battle of Badr, when 'Utba, Shayba, and Walid b. Rabi'a came ahead of their ranks and challenged the Muslims for a single combat, some youths of the Ansar stepped forth to face them. The Quraishite warriors, however, asked who they were and on coming to know that they belonged to the Ansar, replied, "We have nothing to do with you." Then one of them called out, "Muhammad (peace be upon him), send forth some of own rank and blood to face us." Thereupon the Apostle ordered, "Advance, O 'Ubayda b. Al-Harith; Advance, O Hamza; Advance, O 'Ali." When the three were already up at them and had already told their names, the Quraishite said, "Yes, these are noble and our peers." The self-conceited Quraish used to look down upon farming, the occupation taken up by the Ansar owing to the physical features of their city. We find a commensurate display of similar egotism with what Abu Jahal said when he was slain by two Ansar lads who were sons of 'Afra. Abu Jahl said to 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud although he was nearing his end, "Would that somebody else than a cultivator had slain me!"²

¹ Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 625

² Muhammad b. Tahir Patni writes in *Majm'a al-Bihar* that the Arabs did not consider cultivation to be an occupation befitting a man of noble descent. Abu Jahl meant that if anybody else than the sons of 'Afra, who was a cultivator, had killed him he would not have felt ashamed. (Vol. I, p. 68)

ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS

Medina was a veritable oasis. The soil warranted a systematic cultivation and, hence, its population was given over to farming and gardening. The main produce of the city consisted of grapes and dates, of which there were numerous groves,¹ trellised and untrellised. Two or more palm-trees occasionally grew out of a single root. (See Qur'an 141 and 13:4.)

Cereals and vegetables of different varieties were cultivated in the farms but the date remained the chief item on the menu of the people, especially in times of drought, for the fruit could be stored for sale or exchanged with other necessities. The date palm was the queen of Arabian trees, the source of the prosperity concerning the people of Medina, providing them with solid food and fodder for the camels. Its stems, barks and leaves were also utilized in the construction of houses and manufacture of other goods for daily use.²

Countless varieties of dates³ were grown in Madina where the people had evolved, through experience and experimentation, methods to improve the quality and production of dates. Among these was the distinction made between the male pollens and female pistils of date palms and the fertilization of ovules which was known as Tabir.⁴

¹ The date-palm groves of Medina grew into thick clusters spreading out extensively. A tradition says that Abu Talha was one of those Ansar who possessed a grove so thickly clustered that if a small bird got into his grove, it found it difficult to come out of it. Once, when he was offering prayers his eyes happened to meet a sparrow which was fluttering to get out. He was so fascinated that his thoughts turned away from the prayer for a moment. He felt so wrong by his momentary inattentiveness to the prayers that he gave away that grove called B'irha for the sake of God.

² See Bukhari, Kitab lul 'Ilm and its commentary by Ibn Hajr and 'Oyeni.

³ Arab authors list an enormous vocabulary for dates which is an indication of the importance it occupied for the Arabs, in general, and for the people of Medina, in particular. *Adab al-Katib* by Ibn Qutaiba, *Fiqah ul-Lughah* by Th'alabi and *Al-Makhassis* by Ibn Sidah need be seen in the connection. There are also treatises written on dates by other authors.

⁴ The device used was to incise ovules for injecting pollens.

Medina was a leading agricultural center, it had also a flourishing mercantile business but not of the same magnitude as that of Mecca. The barren, rocky valley of Mecca allowed no other occupation save to set out with merchandise caravans regularly during the summer and winter season for their source of livelihood.

Certain industrial pursuits were restricted to the Jews of Madina. They had probably brought these expertise to Medina from Yemen as, for instance, Abni Qaynuqa practiced the trade of goldsmiths. Wealthier than other tribes occupying Medina, the houses of the Jews were flushed with money and abounding in gold and silver.¹

The soil of Medina is excessively fertile because of the volcanic matter that made possible the surrounding lava plains. The town stands at the lower part of the valley where water courses running from the higher altitudes irrigated the agricultural lands and date-palm plantations. A verdant *wadi* well supplied with water and laden with gardens and vineyards, then known as 'Aqiq, was the pleasure spot of Medina's residents. There were many wells scattered all over the town whereby almost every garden had one by which it was irrigated, for underground water was found in excess.

The vineyards and date plantations, enclosed by garden walls, were known as *ha'yet*.² The wells had sweet and plentiful supply of water, which was channeled to the orchards by means of canals or through lift irrigation.³

¹ *Al-Yahud fi balad il-'Arab*, p. 128

² Bukhari, Kitab ul Maghazi, K'ab b. Malik says that after he had endured much from the hardness of the people, he walked off and climbed over the wall of Abu Qatada's orchard.

³ See the Tradition related by Abu Huraira in which he makes a mention of channels and spades for digging them. (Muslim).

Barley was the main cereal produced in Medina with wheat as the second one, but vegetables were grown in abundance. Transactions of different types⁴ like *Muzababa*⁵, *Muhaqala*,⁶ *Mukhabra*,⁷ *Mu'awama*,⁸ etc. were in vogue, some of which were retained by Islam while others were modified or forbidden altogether.

The coins in circulation at Mecca and Medina were similar to that of the ones mentioned in the section covering Mecca. However, as the inhabitants of Medina had to transact their business in foodgrains and fruits, they had more of their dealings with measures of capacity. These measures were *Mudd*, *S'a*, *Faraq*, *'Araq* and *Wasaq*. The measures of weight prevalent in Medina were *dirham*, *shihaq*, *danaq*, *qirat*, *naqwat ratl*, *qintar* and *auqiya*.¹

Medina had a fertile soil but it was not self-sufficient in foodgrains, so it had to import some of its needed foodstuffs. Flour,² refined butter and honey were brought from Syria. Tirmidhi relates on the authority of Qatada b. N'uman that the staple diet of the people of Medina consisted of dates and barley but those who were rich used to purchase flour from the Syrian merchants³ for their own consumption while other members of

⁴ See the chapters dealing with cultivation and farmers in the *Sihah*.

⁵ It meant the sale of fruit on the palm-trees for a specified measures of dates.

⁶ It meant the sale of harvest before it was reaped for specified measure of the same foodgrain.

⁷ It stood for renting land for a third or a quarter of the produce on the condition that the seed was provided by the owner of the land. It was called *muza'a* if the seed was provided by the cultivator but certain lexicographers consider the two to be synonyms (See the commentary on *Sharh Muslim* by an-Nawawi).

⁸ Selling of harvest two or three years ahead.

¹ For details see the books on Traditions and *Al-Taratib-al-Idariyah* by 'Abdul Ha'I al-Kattani, Vol. pp. 413-15.

² The word used in Arabic is *darmak* which stands for fine, soft powder of wheat meal.

³ Known as *dafit*, they were Nabataean merchants as stated by Muhammad Tahir Patni. (*Majm'a Bahar*, Vol. III, p. 140).

the family had to make do with dates and barley.⁴ This report brings to light the culinary habits as well as the disparity in the standards of living of the well-to-do and the poorer sections of the society in Medina existing before the migration of the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

In their character and disposition, the Jews have remained unchanged in every place and age, bringing to pass almost the same course of human affairs. In Medina, they constituted the affluent class while the Arab tribesman, like other naïve and guileless Bedouins, were not bothered about the future and did not even concern themselves on saving for a rainy day. Apart from that, generosity was in their blood, which manifested itself in selflessly spending for the entertainment of their guests. Naturally enough, they were very often forced to borrow money with interest from the Jews by pledging their personal property.

The livestock raised by the people consisted, for the most part, of camels, cows and ewes. Even then, the camels were also employed for irrigating the agricultural lands wherein they are finally called al-Ibil un-Nawadeh when used in such manner. Medina had several pastures, of which the two, Dhoghabata and Ghaba, were more well-known. Residents of Medina used to put their flocks for grazing on these pasturelands, while at the same time making such grazing grounds as their source of firewood. They reared horses as well, though not in the same scale as did the inhabitants of Mecca, for military operations. Banu Sulaym were distinguished for their horsemanship although they used to import their horses from other regions.

Medina had a number of markets, the most important of which was the one conducted by Bani Qaynuqa which consisted of silver and gold ornaments, clothes and other handiworks, cotton and silk fabrics. Varied carpets and curtains with decorative

⁴ See Tirmidhi commentary on the Qur'anic verse 4:107.

designs¹ were normally available in this market. Similarly, there were shopkeepers who sold ambergris and quicksilver.² Numerous forms of business transactions had come into practice, some of which were upheld by Islam while others were forbidden. The dealings that had come into vogue were known as *najash-wa-ahtikar*, *talaqqi ur-ruk'ban*, *ba'i ul-masarrat*, *ba'i nasi'ah*, *ba'i al-hadir lalbadi*, *ba'i ul-mujazafah*, *ba'i ul-mudhabana* and *makhadrah*.³

The social and cultural life of the common people in Medina was, thanks to their elegant taste, fairly well advanced. Two-storeyed houses were common in Madina¹ where some of these had even attached kitchen gardens. The people were used to drinking sweet water, which often had to be brought in from a distance. Cushions² were used for sitting and the household utensils included bowls and drinking vessels made of stones and glasses. Lamps were manufactured in different designs.³ Bags and small baskets were used for carrying articles of daily use and corn from the fields. The residences of those who were affluent, particularly the Jews, were well-decorated with other types of furniture. The jewelry worn by the womenfolk were bracelets, armlets, wristlets, earring circlets, rings, golden or gem necklaces,⁴ etc.

¹ In a Tradition related by 'Aisha contained in the Bukhari and Muslim, the word used for the curtain is *Qiram*, which, according to Muhammad Tahir Patni, was fine multi-coloured woolen fabric or a cloth with decorative designs hung as a screen in the bridal chamber (*Majm'a Bahar ul-Anwar*, Hyderabad, Vol. IV, p. 258).

² *Al-Taratib al-Idariyah*, Vol. I, p. 97

³ For details see the chapters dealing with business transactions in the books on traditions and Fiqah which explain the legality or otherwise of the different forms these transactions. Also see *Majm'a Bahar ul-Anwar al-Idariyah*, Vol. I, p. 97)

¹ See the Traditions relating to the arrival of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in Medina and his stay in the ground floor of Abu Ayyub Ansari's house.

² *At-Taratib al-Idariyah*, Vol. I, p.97

³ *Ibid.*, p. 104

⁴ Relating the event of *Ifak*, contained in the Kitab ul-Mughazi of the Bukhari. 'Aisha has used the word *Jiza* for the necklace lost by her. The word stands for precious stones of white and black colour found in Yemen at Zifar.

Spinning and weaving were popular domestic endeavors from which women find solace in their spare time at Medina. Sewing and dyeing of clothes, house-building, brick-laying and stone crafts were some of the manual arts already known to the city folk before the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) emigrated there.

YATHRIB'S ADVANCED AND COMPOSITE SOCIETY

The hijrah of the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his companions from Mecca to Medina was, in no wise, an emigration from a town to any hinterland known by the name of Yathrib but from one city to another. The new home of the émigrés was, at the same time different in many respects from the town they had left. For one, it was comparatively smaller from the former but the society there was more complex in comparison to the social life of Mecca. The Apostle was, therefore, expected to come across problems of a different scope and nature owing to the subscription of its populace to different religions offering various social codes and customs, not to forget its divergent cultural patterns. The Herculean task ahead of him was one of alleviating and overcoming such a prevailing situation. By and large, this feat could only be accomplished by a prophet, commissioned and blessed by God with wisdom, foresight, conviction and firmness of purpose, and capacity to smother and blend the conflicting ideas and ideals into a new concept, one which could usher the dying humanity into a new brave world. And, above all, such an arbiter or savior had to have a loveable personality. How very aptly has God set forth the services rendered by that benefactor of the human race:

“And (as for the believers, He) has attuned their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth you could not have attuned their hearts, but Allah has attuned them. Lo! He is Mighty, Wise” (Qur'an 8:63).

IN MADINA

THE CORDIAL WELCOME

The news about the Apostle's departure from Mecca spread fast. Eagerly expecting his arrival, the Ansars used to go out after morning prayers to the outskirts of the city and await his arrival until there was no more shade and the sun became unbearable. Then, it being the hot season, they returned to their homes, sad and disappointed.

At last, the Apostle arrived one day. The Ansar had already returned to their houses but a Jew, who happened to see him, cried aloud announcing his arrival. Everybody rushed out to greet the Apostle whom they found sitting beneath a tree with Abu Bakr who was of like age. Many of them had never seen the Apostle and did not know which of the two was the Prophet. They crowded round both, but Abu Bakr realized their difficulty. He rose up, stood behind the Apostle shielding him with a piece of cloth from the sun, and thus dispelled the doubts of the people.¹

More or less five hundred Ansars rushed to pay their respects to the Apostle of God; they requested him to enter the city, saying, "Ride on! You two are safe and we shall obey you!"

The Apostle went on, accompanied by his companions and the welcoming crowd. The inhabitants of Medina stood in front of their doors, the women lined up on the roofs asking one another about the Prophet. Anas says that he never came across such a happy event later on.²

The people thronged in the way and their doors and windows

¹ Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 492

² Ibn Kathir, Vol. II, p. 256, Ahmad b. Hanbal on the authority of Anas b. Malik.

and on the roofs of the houses. The slaves and lads cried excitedly, “Allah-O-Akbar [Allah is Greates], the Prophet of God has come! Allah-O-Akbar [Allah is Greates], the Prophet of God has come!”¹

Bara b. Azib, who was then in his youth, had said: “I never saw the people of Medina show joy so great as the happiness they expressed on the arrival of the Apostle of God where even the slave-girls were shouting that the Apostle of God has arrived!”

The faithful greeted the arrival of the Apostle with the joyful cries of Allah-O-Akbar. No other welcome wore that festive glance to gladden their hearts.

Medina appeared to be jubilant, beaming into a smile, the young maidens of Aus and Khazraj felt elated and sang in chorus.²

“On the hillside whence caravans are given a send off,
The full moon comes up this day.
All the while God is praised,
We had better return our thanks
The holy one, O you sent to us,
You have brought binding commands.”³

Anas b. Malik had not come of age when the Apostle came to Madina. He was present on the occasion and he said, “I never saw a day more graceful and radiant than the day when the Apostle came to us.”³

¹ Bukhari, Chap. The Migration of the Prophet, on the authority of Abu Bakr.

² Bukhari, Chap. The Migration of the Prophet, on the authority of Abu Bakr.

³ Ibn Kathir, Vol. II, p. 269. On the authority of ‘Aisha

³ Ibn Qayyim has raised an issue about these verse wherein he says that the hillside ‘Thaniyatul Wid’a mentioned in these verses is not on the (south-north) road leading from Mecca to Medina, but is on the road one takes for Syria from Medina. He, therefore, holds the view that these verses were recited on the occasion of the Apostle’s triumphant return from Tabuk. Bukhari also mentions the place in question in connection with the expedition. On the other hand, almost all the biographers, including the earliest ones, relate that the verses were recited on the Prophet’s

THE MOSQUE OF QUBA

The Apostle stayed for four days in Quba where he laid the foundation of a mosque. He left Quba on Friday; the time for Friday prayers found him among the clan of banu Salim b. 'Auf where he performed the prayer in their mosque. This was the first Friday prayer offered by the Apostle of God in Medina.¹

IN THE HOUSE OF ABU AYYUB ANSARI

As the Apostle rode through the streets of the city, people approached him in batches with everyone offering to accommodate him in their homes. They said, "Live with us and enjoy our wealth, honor and protection." Sometimes they took hold of his camel's halter, but he said to one and all, "Let her go her way. She is guided by Allah." This happened more than once.

While the Apostle was going through the locality of Bani an-Najjar, the slave girls of the clan recited these verses to greet him:

"Daughters of Bani Najjar we are, What a luck! Muhammad is our neighbor!" On reaching the house of Bani Malik b. an-

first coming to Madina. The writer has inquired about it from the inhabitants of Medina who told him that one coming from Mecca can also take the road going towards Syria. It is just possible that in view of the conditions in which the Prophet had to emigrate to Medina, he might have preferred the other route. It is also to be noted that Thaniyatul Wid'a was not the name given to a single spot in Medina. On the way to Mecca, there is a similar elevation which slopes down to the Wadi Aqiq, surrounded by low plains on all sides. It was a pleasure resort of Medina in olden times where people used to assemble in the evening during the summer season. It is also probable that the verses allude to this place, for, at this place also the caravans going to Mecca were given a send off. (*Athar al-Madina al-Munawwara*, 3rd Edition, p. 160).

The verses in question furnish intrinsic evidence that they were sung at a time when the Prophet first came to Medina. The vigour and spirit of the verses, particularly the last one, clearly indicate that these were recited when the people of Medina first found the Prophet among them. Even if the verses were recited on the return of the Prophet from the expedition of Tabuk, as some of the authentic Traditions relate, it merely means that the verses were stated again on that occasion, since, a popular song like this is very often repeated on joyous occasions.

¹ Darimi, on the authority of Anas

Najjar, the Apostle's camel knelt by herself at the place where now stands the gate of the Prophet's mosque. The place was then used for drying dates and belonged to two orphan boys who were related to the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on his mother's side.

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) dismounted from his camel. Abu Ayyub Khalid b. Zayd, who belonged to the clan of an-Najjar, hastily unloaded the camel and took the luggage to his house. Thus, the Prophet stayed with Abu Ayyub, who paid him the greatest respect and did all he could to entertain the honored guests. Abu Ayyub was loath even to live in the upper-story, as he requested the Apostle to occupy the place and came down with his family to live in the ground floor. The Apostle, however, said to him, "O Abu Ayyub, it would be more convenient for me as well as those who come to see me if I stay in the lower portion."

Abu Ayyub Ansari was not a man of means, but he was extremely happy on having the Apostle as his guest. He was besides himself with joy at the great honor bestowed by God on him. The loving regard he paid to the prophet was an indication of his genuine gratitude to God and the Apostle himself. "We used to prepare the evening meal for the Apostle of God," says Abu Ayyub, "and send it to him. We used to take only what was left. Umm Ayyub and I took the food from beside the part the Apostle had taken in order to partake in its blessings. In compliance with the Apostle's preference, he lived in the ground floor, while we occupied the upper portion. Once, we broke a jar of water whereby Umm Ayyub and I mopped up the water with the only robe we had for fear that it would drop on the Apostle thereby causing him inconvenience."¹

¹ Ibn Is'haq, on the authority of Abu Ayyub Ansari, Ibn Kathir, Vol. II, p. 277.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPHET'S MOSQUE

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent for the two boys who owned the date-store and asked them to name the price of the yard. They answered, "Nay, but we shall make you a gift of it, O Apostle of God!" The Apostle, however, refused their offer, paid them its price and built a mosque there.¹

The Apostle himself carried the unburned bricks for construction of the building along with the other Muslims. He is reported to have recited as he worked.

"O God! The true reward is the reward of the hereafter, have mercy O God on the Ansars and Mujajirin."²

Overjoyed to see the Messenger of God invoking blessings on them, the Muslims, too, sang and thanked God.

The Prophet lived in the house of Abu Ayyub Ansari for seven months.³ In the meantime, the construction of the mosque and apartments for the Apostle's family were completed and he moved to live in his house.

The Muslims who had been restrained from migration by the polytheists of Mecca continued to emigrate to Medina until the only ones left there were those who were either forcibly detained or had apostatized. On the other hand, not a house of Ansar was left in which the people had not sworn allegiance to God and His Apostle.⁴

BONDS OF BROTHERHOOD BETWEEN THE ANSARS

¹ Bukhari, Chapter Arrival of the Prophet and his companions in Medina.

² Ibn Kathir, Vol. II, p. 251

³ Ibid, p. 279

⁴ Ibn Hisham, vol. I, pp. 499-500

AND MUHAJIRIN

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) established bonds of brotherhood between the Muhajirin and the Ansar putting them under an agreement and obligation of mutual welfare, benevolence and assistance. Each Ansari took a Muhajir brother, where the former went so far as to give his Muhajir brother half of whatever he possessed in the form of houses, assets, lands and groves. Such was the enthusiasm of the Ansars to share everything with their brothers-in-faith that they divided everything into two parts to draw lots for allocating their share. In most cases, they tried to give the Muhajirin the fairer portion of their property.

An Ansari would say to his émigré brother “Behold, I shall divide my possessions into two halves. And I have two wives, see whichever of the two pleases you better, and tell me her name. I shall divorce her and you wed her.” The Muhajir would answer, “May God bless you in your family and your possessions! Just tell me where the market is.”

The Ansar were magnanimous and self-denying and the Muhajir forbearing, self-reliant.¹

COVENANT BETWEEN THE MUSLIMS AND THE JEWS

Shortly thereafter, the Apostle had a document written which bound the Muhajirin and the Ansars to a friendly agreement. The covenant made the Jews a party to the treaty that guaranteed them the freedom of their rights and obligations.²

¹ Bukhari, see the conversation between ‘Abdur Rahman b. Auf and S’ad b. Rabi in the section dealing with the ‘Brotherhood established by the Prophet between the Muhajirin and the Ansar.’

² Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 501

THE CALL TO PRAYER

After the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) settled down and Islam was deeply entrenched in the soil of Medina, the mode of calling the faithful to prayer caught the attention of the Prophet. He disliked the customs of the Jews and Christians, like kindling fire or the use of bell and horn to summon the people to such a spiritual obligation. Initially, the Muslims used to come by themselves for prayer at the scheduled time without any announcement or call at all. While different proposals were being considered, God guided the Muslims to the method of giving the call to prayer. A number of companions had a vision of the call in their dreams, which was approved by the Apostle and prescribed as the official form of assembling the Muslims for such a worship act. Bilal was entrusted by the Apostle to give the call to prayer and thus he came to be known as the Muadhhdhin of the Prophet and the leader of all those who would call the faithful to prayer until the end of time.

HYPROCRICY RAISES ITS HEAD IN MEDINA

There was no room for deception and double-dealing in Mecca.¹ Islam was helpless, harried and harassed there. Moreover, none had the power to turn the tide in Mecca, nor could anyone think of gaining any advantage by accepting Islam. Giving one's faith to Islam meant one was prepared to set the whole of Mecca at defiance and to risk one's life. Only one venturesome in spirit and having the courage of convictions could bear to play with the fire of hostility raging in the hearts of Islam's enemies, only a man of mettle could take a chance with his life and property, future and prosperity. In Mecca, there were not two powers equally poised; the heathens were brought out forcefully by the

¹ Most of the exegetes of the Qur'an agree that the Qur'anic verses making a mention of hypocrites were revealed in Medina. A verse of the Qur'an in chapter 'Repentance' (9:101) specifically refers to the hypocrites among the townspeople of Medina.

Quran in its elegant style.

“And remember, when you were few and reckoned feeble in the land, and were in fear lest men should extirpate you” (Qur’an 8:26).

When Islam found a new safe haven in Madina and the Apostle and his companions were blessed with peace and stability, Islam began to prosper. It brought into existence a new society, a new brotherhood of men united by the consciousness of a common outlook in life and common aspirations as expressed by Islamic principles. The dazzling spectacle of an idealistic commonwealth meant a complete break with the past for the change was so radical so as to induce the fainthearted to sail under false colors. This was quite logical or rather based on the natural instincts of those who could not cope with the revolutionary movement. Also, pharisaism shows up its mettle only where two contending powers or principles are pitted against each other, for the indecisive and the spineless are always wavering, swinging from one end to another. They are always in two minds, hesitant and never able to take a final decision. Often they hang together with one of the two contenders, profess loyalty and try to go along with it, but their self-solicitude and vested interests do not permit them to cling on and sacrifice and endure with it. The fear that the other party might recover its strength someday never evades them, nor are they ever able to make a total break with their past for the sake of new ideas or ideals. This is a delicate state of disloyalty or infirmity of purpose portrayed graphically by the Qur’an as follows:

“And among the mankind is he who worships Allah upon a narrow merge so that if good befalls him, he is content therewith, but if a trial befalls him, he falls away utterly. He loses both the world and the hereafter. That is the sheer loss” (Qur’an 22:11).

The distinctive trait of this group is delineated in another verse, which says:

“Swaying between this (and that), (belonging) neither to these nor to those.” (Qur’an 4:143)

The leader of the hypocrites, drawn from the ranks of Aus and Khazraj as well as the Jews of Medina, was Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Sal’ul. Exhausted by the battle of Buath that was fought between the Aus and Khazraj around five years before the arrival of the Apostle of God in Medina, both these tribes had agreed to recognize ‘Abdullah b. Ubayy as their leader. By the time Islam came to gain adherents in Medina, preparations were already being made to formally crown him as the king of the city. When he saw that the people were being won over by Islam, quickly and in large numbers, he became so annoyed that his resentment lingered to prey on his mind.

Ibn Hisham writes,

When the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to Madina the leader there was ‘Abdallah b. Ubayy Salul al-‘Aufi, none of his own people contested his authority and Aus and khazraj never rallied to one man before or after him, until Islam came, as they did to him... ‘Abdallah b. Ubayy’s people had made a sort of jewelled diadem to crown him and make him their king when God sent His Apostle to them; so when his people forsook him in favour of Islam he was filled with enmity realising that the Apostle had deprived him of his kingship. However, when he saw that his people determined to go over to Islam he went too, but unwillingly, retaining his enmity and dissimulating.¹

¹ Ibn Hisham, vol. I, pp. 277-8 (Trans. A Guillaume)

All those persons who had a suppressed desire concealed in their hearts or were ambitious of a name or power or authority felt cut to the heart at the success of religion that welded the Muhajirin and the Ansar as two bodies with one soul and inspired them with the love for the Prophet which was even more intense than one felt for one's own father, son and wife. Hate and ill will against the Apostle filled their heart and they started hatching plots against Muslims. This was how a coalition of the two faced malcontents came into existence within the Islamic society, but they masqueraded as part and parcel of the Muslim society, but were in reality no better than the snake in the grass, the Muslims had to be even more careful of them than the declared enemies of God.

This is why the Qur'an repeatedly exposes their falseheartedness and warns against their concealed designs. Their surreptitious intrigues continued to undermine the stability of the Islamic society and, hence, the works on the life of the Prophet cannot do otherwise than describe their activities.

BEGINNING OF JEWISH ANIMOSITY

After maintaining an attitude of indifference and neutrality at the start, the Jews gradually began to show their hatred and rancor against Islam. In the beginning they steered a middle course between the Muslims and the pagans and the Arab tribes of Mecca and Medina—or were rather inclined towards the Muslims. The Jews of Medina had, in the beginning, felt closer to the Muslims owing to the striking resemblance between such fundamental teachings of Islam as prophecy and prophethood, belief in the Hereafter, Unity of Godhead, etc. and their own faith, notwithstanding the differences in details as well as the fact that undue veneration of certain Prophets and adoption of pagan custom through their age-long association with heathens

had beclouded their pristine faith in monotheism.¹

It was thus reasonably expected that if they did not side with the Muslims, they would at least remain non-partisan. At any rate, Islam testified the divine origin of scriptures and called upon the Muslims to have faith in all the Hebrew prophets. This is a fundamental dogma of faith in Islam, thus expressed by the Qur'an,

"Each one believes in Allah and His Angels and His scriptures and His messengers. We make no distinction between any of His messenger" (Qur'an 2:285).

Would that the Jews had understood the conciliatory mood of Islam. Had it been so, the history of Islam or rather the world's history would have been entirely different today. Then Islam would not have faced the impediments it had to encounter in the dissemination of its message, especially in its initial stages, resulting from the strife between the early Muslim, armed only with the strength of their faith, and the powerful and influential, educated and wealthy Jews of the time. The attitude of the Jews could be attribute to two causes. One of these was their inborn trait of envy and covetousness, bigotry and narrow-mindedness and obstinate rigidity while the other lay in their errant beliefs, misdemeanors and wickedness, repeatedly critisized by the Qur'an and illustrated by a reference to their past doings, for instance, constantly wrangling with their own prophets, opposing their teachings and even putting them to death, refusing to take the right path, bearing ill will and malice to those who commended the path of virtues, speaking slightly of God, excessive greed of wealth, driving hard usurious bargains despite its interdiction, grabbing the property of others, making interpolations in the Torah to suit their convenience, the insatiate thirst for worldly life and what it stand for and the

¹ See the Chapter 'The Age of Ignorance'

national and racial jingoism which had become their characteristic hallmarks.

Had there been a political leader in the place of the Apostle of God, he would have tactfully met the Jews halfway, especially in view of their importance in the tangled Medinian politics. Even if it were not possible to placate the Jews, a national leader would have at least avoided to set them at odds against him by concealing his ultimate objective. But, as a messenger of God, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was obliged to preach the message sent by God, proclaim the truth, interdict what was forbidden and countenance no vestiges of evil and piquancy. He had been saddled with the responsibility to deliver the message of God to the whole World, to all races and the nations including the Jews and Christians, and to invite them to accept Islam regardless of the cost or consequences it involved. This was really the path taken by all the prophets of old—a distinctive mark of the prophets—which is never the way taken by politicians and national leaders.

But this was what the Jews detested most for it struck at the roots of their beliefs and mental outlook, or, rather their very nature and character, and it led them to become hostile to Islam and the Muslims. They gave up their earlier policy of steering the middle course and decided to oppose Islam in every way possible, openly as well as through intrigues. Israel Welpenson, quoted here, has been frank and straightforward in his analysis of the reasons for ill will between the Jews and the Muslims:

If the teachings of the Prophet had been restricted only to the denunciation of idolatry and the Jews had not been called upon to acknowledge his prophethood, there would have been no conflict between the Jews and the Muslims. The Jews might have then commended and acclaimed the Prophet's doctrine of monotheism and backed him or even

supported him with men and material until he had succeeded in destroying the idols and effacing polytheistic creed rampant in Arabia. But this depended on the condition that he left the Jews and their religion well enough alone, and not demanded the acceptance of the new prophethood. For the bent of Jewish temperament cannot take kindly to anything that tries to seduce it from its faith, they can never acknowledge any prophet save one belonging to Bani Israel.¹

The Jews were further shocked and agitated when some of their learned rabbis, like ‘Abdallah Salam, whom they held in esteem, embraced Islam. The Jews could never think that a man of his standing and erudition would accept the new faith. However, this only served to make the Jews still more annoyed and jealous of Islam.²

The animosity of the Jews against Islam was not such as to be content with defying or putting up a bold front against Islam, although the Muslims shared their faith in monotheism. It was only logical as well as reasonable to expect that if the Jews were called upon to bring in their verdict on the Prophet’s faith vis-a-vis the idolatrous creed of the Quaraysh, they would speak well of Islam and the soundness of its belief in one God against the multiplicity of deities taken for granted by the pagans of Mecca. But their animus against Islam had so maddened them that they were willing even to deny that gospel truth. Once, when some of the rabbis went to Mecca, the Quraysh asked them whether their idolatrous religion or that of the Prophet was better, the answer these rabbis gave was, “Your religion is better than his and you

¹ *Al-Yahud fi Balad il-‘Arab*, p. 123

² The number of Jews who accepted Islam and had the honour of enjoying the Apostle’s company was 39. Some of them belong to the category of eminent companions, as can be seen from their biographical details contained in the books on the *Tabaqat-I-Sahabah*, such as, *Al-Isabah*, *Al-Isti’ab*, *Usd al-Ghabah*, etc. also see *Ahl-I-Kitab Sahabah wa Tabi’yeen* by Mujib Ullah Nadwi from which the number of Jewish converts to Islam, quoted above, has been taken.

are more rightly-guided than they.”³ The comment of Dr. Israel Welpenson on the reply given by the Jews is worth repeating here,

But, surely, the thing for which they deserved to be reproached and which would be painful to all those who believe in the Unity of God, whether they be Jews or Muslims, was the conversation between the Jews and pagan Quraishites wherein they had given preference to the religion of the Quraysh over what had been brought by the Prophet of Islam.¹

The same writer further goes on to say:

Deception, mendacity and similar means for entrapping the enemy have been sanctioned by the nations for achieving a military objective in times of warfare, yet, the Jews ought not to have committed the grievous mistake of declaring roundly that adoration of idols was preferable to the Islamic faith in the Unity of God; not even if they feared to miss the mark by doing so. For Bani Israel had, in the name of their forefathers, held aloft the banner of God’s Unity for ages amidst heathen nations of the old, had all along braved innumerable trials and tribulations, and gone through fire and blood for its sake; it was their bounden duty to sacrifice their lives and whatever they held dear to humble the idolaters and polytheists.²

Of a fact, the matter was sufficiently serious to warrant a reference in the Qur’an:

“Have you not seen those unto whom a portion of the Scripture

³ Ibn Hisham, Vol. II, p. 214. It was on this occasion that the verse 4:51 of the Qur’an was sent down by God.

¹ *Al Yahud fi Balad il-Arab*, p. 142

² *ibid.*,

has been given, how they believe in idols and false deities, and how they say about those (idolaters) who disbelieve: These are more rightly guided than those who believe?” (Qur’an 4:51).

CHANGE OF THE QIBLAH

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as well as the Muslims had been facing towards Jerusalem while worshipping, or, as they called it, took Jerusalem as their Qiblah.¹ The practice was followed for one year and four months after emigration to Madina. The Apostle desired that the K’aba were made the Qiblah for prayers as did the other Arab converts to Islam, since they had been holding the sanctuary at Mecca in a reverential regard since immemorial times. To them the house of worship built by Ibrahim and Ismail was the holy of the holies, incomparable in sanctity to any other sanctum or shrine; they were put to a severe test by being asked to face Jerusalem instead of K’abah, and they stood this trial by dutifully obeying the divine command. Such was their devotion to the Apostle that they always replied: “We hear, and we obey,”² and “We believe therein: The whole is from our Lord,”³ whether they found anything to their liking or not. Thus, after the faith of the earliest Muslims had been brought to a test and they had stood it successfully, the Qiblah for the prayer was changed to Ka’ba.

“Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that you may be witness against mankind and that the messenger may be witness against you. And We appointed the Qiblah which you formerly observed only that We might know him who follows the messenger from him who turns on his heels. In truth it was a hard (test) save for those whom Allah guided.”⁴

¹ Lit. Anything opposite. The direction in which all Muslims must pray, whether in their private or in their public devotions, namely, towards, K’aba.

² Qur’an 24:51

³ Qur’an 3:7

⁴ Qur’an 2:143

The Muslims changed their direction promptly in prayer, in compliance with divine command, towards K'aba which was henceforth selected as the Qiblah for all the believers, living in any part of the World, for all times to come.⁵

JEWS GIVE OFFENCE TO MUSLIMS

It preyed upon the minds of the Jews that Islam had gained a footing in Medina and was making rapid strides day after day. They were intelligent enough to realise that if the popularity of Islam continued unabated for some time more, it would be difficult for them to stand up against their potential enemies. They decided to put up a front against the Muslims and launched a campaign to slight, vilify and ridicule the Muslims who, however, were not permitted to return the 'compliments' paid to them: they were still commanded to be long-suffering and forbearing "Withhold your hands, establish worship"¹ was the code of behaviour enjoined upon them, so that they might learn to disdain the world and its pleasures, become self-denying, get prepared to make sacrifice for a higher cause and have the experience of obeying the commands of God.

PERMISSION TO FIGHT

Gradually the Muslims were invested with power and became strong enough to take up arms against their enemies, they were then allowed to resist aggression and to fight against the mischief-loving people; but it was only a permission rather than obligation to join in clash of arms with the enemies.²

"Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been

⁵ See *Sihah Sittah* and the Quranic verse relating to the change of the qiblah.

¹ Qur'an 4:77

² See *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 314

*wronged; and Allah is indeed able to give them victory”
(Qur'an 22:39).*

EXPIDITION OF ABWA AND ‘ABDALLAH B. JAHSH

In pursuance of the command given by God, the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) started sending raiding parties for sudden descent on hostile tribes. These raids were not meant to launch out against the enemy but simply to frighten those inimical to Islam by a show of force.

We shall mention here one of the earliest raids, led by ‘Abdallah b. Jahsh, for it gave occasion to a revelation sent down by God which shows that Islam does not countenance the least excess or highhandedness even by its own followers. Islam is always fair and impartial, without any regard to persons or parties, in bringing its verdict on every affair.

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent ‘Abdallah b. Jahsh on an expedition with eight emigrants during the month of Rajab 2 A.H. He gave him a letter with the instruction that he was not to read it until he had journeyed for two days, and then act according to the directions contained in it but not to force his companions to follow his orders.

‘Abdallah b. Jash read the letter after he had traveled for two days. The instruction contained in it was, “When you have read this letter, proceed to the oasis of Nakhlah between Mecca and Ta’if. Pitch your tents there to find out the movements of the Quraysh and send the information to us.” Having gone through the letter ‘Abdallah b. Jahsh said, “We hear, and we obey;” and then he said to his companions. “The Apostle of God has ordered me to lie in wait at the oasis on the road between Mecca and Ta’if and watch the movements of the Quraysh so as to bring him news of them, but he has also asked me not to compel anyone of you to follow me. If anyone wishes martyrdom, he

may come with me, and whoever wishes may go back, for I have to abide by the instructions of the Apostle.” Then he went ahead, and so did all of his comrades, not one of them falling out.

The party moved on to the oasis where they bivouacked. In a short while, a caravan of the Quraysh passed by them. ‘Amr b. al-Hadrami was also with the caravan. When the Qurayshites saw the party camping near them they got frightened but when they saw ‘Ukkasha, whose head was shaved, their suspicions were lulled for they took the party to be pilgrims. They said: “Nothing to fear from them, they are pilgrims.”¹ That was the last day of Rajab.² The raiding party, on the other hand, took counsel among them and decided that if they left the Qurayshites alone that night, they would get into the sacred area and obstruct their entry there; but if they fought them, they would be fighting in the sacred month. At first they felt hesitant as well as dismayed but ultimately made up their mind to kill as many of the Quraysh as possible and plunder as much of their good as feasible. Waqid b. ‘Abdallah at-Tamimi shot the first arrow killing ‘Amr b. al-Hadrami while his companions captured two of the Qurayshites. ‘Abdallah b. Jahsh and his companions returned to Madina with his captives.

When ‘Abdallah b. Jahsh and his companions came back to Apostle, he said: “I did not ask you to fight in the sacred month,

¹ Arabs preferred to perform ‘Umra during the month of Rajab.

² Rajab was the first of the four months held to be sacred when it was not lawful to fight. The remaining three months were Dhul Q’adah, Dhil Hijjah and Muharram. Arabs observed this custom during the pre-Islamic and in the initial period of Islamic era, and this also finds a mention in the Qur’an (9:36). But the consensus of the doctors of law is that the interdiction in this regard has been repealed by later revelations which say, “Slay the idolaters wherever you find them” (9:5) and “Wage war on all the idolaters as they are waging war on all of you” (9:36). Said b. Al-Musayyab was asked if the Muslims were permitted to fight the disbelievers during the sacred months. He replied, “Yes. This was so during the wars waged by the earlier Muslims for there is not one instance in the history when the battles were suspended during the month of Rajab or for three months of Dhul Q’adah. Dhil Hijjah and Muharram or when Muslim force left the battlefield for their cantonments during the these months.”

nor seize the caravans and take captives.” The Apostle also refused to accept the spoils brought by the party.

The campaigners were worried and fearfully apprehensive of being doomed. They were also reproached by the other Muslims. On the other and, the Quraysh laid a charge, saying, “Lo! Muhammad (peace be upon him) has allowed war and bloodshed in the sacred months!” It was on this occasion that sent down the revelation to the Apostle:

“They question you (O Muhammad) with regard to warfare in the sacred month. Say: Warfare therein is a great (transgression), but turn (men) from a way of Allah, and to expel the people thence is a greater (sin) with Allah; for persecution is worse than killing.”¹

“God has given a fair deal to His friends as well as foes,” writes Ibn Qayyim in the *Zad al-Ma’ad*, “for He has not commended the sin of fighting in the sacred month, committed by His pious and devout servants. God has held it to be a serious act of transgression but He also reminds that the idolaters have been guilty of even greater sins through their acts of persecution in the sacred city of Mecca, and thus they deserve still more condemnation and punishment. Since, however, the believing servants of God had been guilty of indiscretion or they had made a mistake, God has lent them a hope that they might be forgiven on account of their faith in the Unity of God, submission to Him, migration with the Apostle and their strivings in His way.”¹

The expedition of Abwa, also known as that of Buwat, was the first drive which was led by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in person but there was no fighting.

¹ Qur’an 2:217 (Ibh Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 601-2)

¹ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 341

Thereafter several raiding parties were sent out by the Apostle.

FAST MADE OBLIGATORY

When the Muslims had taken the prayer as a mark and symbol of their faith it had got a hold on their hearts and souls. Then it was, in the second year of Hijrah, that God commanded them to observe the fasts also.²

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil)” (Qur’an 2:183).

In another verse, the Qur’an said,

“The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur’an, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you present, let him fast the month” (Qur’an 2:185).

² Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, pp. 591-606. Also see the chapter dealing with “Fasts” in *The Four Pillars of Islam* by the author.

DECISIVE BATTLE OF BADR

In the second year of the Hijrah, during the month of Ramadan, the Muslims came up against the infidels in the decisive battle of Badr, which was to prove the turning point not only in the destiny of Islam but of the entire human race.

This occasion in which the under equipped Muslims emerged victorious still stands today as one of the founding moments in Islamic history. The battle of Badr was one of the major signs of God, in which He demonstrated that those who believed in Him and His religion would, in the end, be made victorious despite the apparently overwhelming obstacles which laid ahead. This day has been remembered in the Holy Quran as the “Day of Criterion (between right and wrong)”:

“If you believe in Allah and that which We revealed unto Our slaves on the Day of Criterion (between right and wrong), the day when two armies met.”

The circumstances that led to this battle began with the news received by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that a great caravan with lots of money and merchandise was being led by Abu Sufyan on its way back to Mecca from Syria. A state of belligerence already existed between the Muslims and the Quraish, for the latter was doing all in their power to make mischief for Muslims, to impede their progress and to liquidate their rising power. They were sparing none of their financial and physical resources to get on the job and their armed detachments very often waded deep into the limits of Medina and its pastures to pounce upon the Muslims.

Abu Sufyan was one of the worst enemies of Islam. Therefore, the Prophet asked the Muslims to get ready to intercept the caravan. Since, however, it was a commercial caravan the Prophet did not make elaborate arrangements for fighting, but

merely positioned himself in order to catch the caravan off guard.

Informed of the Prophet's decision to intercept him, Abu Sufyan sent a courier to Mecca with an urgent request for reinforcements. Thereupon an armed force was hastily collected by the Quraish—all the notable chiefs of Mecca accompanied the force to which was enlisted every man available from the neighbouring tribes—and this army went forth to assist the caravan. The Quraish were so flared up that hardly a man remained behind in Mecca.

FAITHFULNESS OF THE ANSAR

News came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that a strong Meccan army was on its way to engage him in battle. The Prophet thereupon summoned his followers and asked for their advice. He really wanted to know the reaction of the Ansars, for, their original oath of allegiance with him implied their defending him in Madina and did not put them under an obligation to take part in a military expedition outside their territory. The Muhajirin responded first and assured him of their help and loyalty. The Prophet, however, repeated his question and the Muhajirin gave the same reply. But the Prophet put the same question again for the third time. Now the Ansar realised that the question was meant for them. S'ad b. Mu'ad immediately got up to say in reply, "O Prophet of God, it seems as if you mean us and you want to have our answer. Perhaps you think, O Prophet of God, that the Ansar have undertaken to help you on their own territory only. I want to tell you on behalf of the Ansar that you may lead us wherever you like, align with whom you may desire or break relations with whom you may think fit; you may take whatever you desire from our property and give us as much as you want; for, whatever you would take from our property would be dearer to us than what you would leave for us. We will follow whatever you command us to do.

By God, if you go ahead until you reach Bark Ghimdan,¹ we will accompany you, and by God if you march into the sea, we will also march in with you.”

Then Miqdad got up and said, “O Prophet of God, we will not say as the Children of Israel said to Moses: Go you and your Lord and fight, we will sit here;¹ we will fight with you on your left and on your right, in your front and in your rear.”

The Prophet was delighted to hear the replies given by his companions. He said, “Go ahead with glad tidings.”²

ENTHUSIASM OF THE YOUNGSTERS

When the detachments went out from Medina, a boy of sixteen, whose name was ‘Umair b. Abi Waqqas, also accompanied the warriors stealthily because he feared that if the Prophet saw him, he would send him back due his young age. When his elder brother, S’ad b. Abi Waqqas saw ‘Umair avoiding the gaze of the Prophet, he asked him the reason for it. “Umair replied, “I am afraid that the Prophet of God will send me back due to my age, but I want to take part in the battle. God may perhaps honour me with martyrdom.” When the Prophet saw ‘Umair he asked him to go back but he started crying and was allowed to stay with them. ‘Umair was killed in the battle and thus his hearts desire was fulfilled.³

STRENGTH OF THE CONTENDING PARTIES

¹ A place in Yemen. Others say that it is the farthest point of Hijr. Suhayli (the commentator of Ibn Hisham) says that according to certain exegetes it was a city in Abyssinia. It, thus, meant a far off place. It has been mentioned as Bark-al-Ghimad by Ibn Hisham (*Zad al-Ma’ad*, vol. I, p. 342).

¹ Qur’an 5:24

² *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, pp. 342-43, *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 614. Bukhari and Muslim have also related the conversation with a little variation.

³ *Usd ul-Ghaba*, vol. IV, p. 148

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) rallied forth to the battlefield with three hundred and thirteen combatants who were not well-equipped. The Muslims had seventy camels and two horses on which men rode by turns.¹ There was nothing to distinguish the soldiers from the captains, not even the eminent companions like Abu Bakr and 'Umar or the Prophet himself bore any mark of distinction.

The standard of the army was given to Mus'ab b. 'Umayr, the flag of the Muhajirin was with 'Ali and that of the Ansar with S'ad b. Muadh.

On coming to know of the approaching Muslim army, Abu Sufyan turned his caravan towards the seacoast. He also sent word to the Quraish army, when he was at a safe distance from the Muslims, to go back home as it there was of no purpose for them to proceed ahead. Many of the Meccans too wanted to return home but Abu Jahl insisted on going ahead in order to punish the raiders. His forces were a thousand strong with all the veterans and noted fighters of Mecca, and all were well-armed. He did not want to lose the opportunity to engage the Muslims in a battle.² On coming to know the names of the Meccan chiefs accompanying Abu Jahl, the Prophet remarked: "Mecca has brought the pieces of heart to you!"

THE DEMOCRATIC WAY

The Quraish army halted on reaching a *wadi* (valley) near Badr while the Muslims pitched their tents nearer to the water (wells of Badr), which was more suitable for engaging the enemy.

The Prophet and some of his close companions were the first ones to arrive at the camping ground that evening; a cistern was

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 342

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 343 and *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 618-19

built and filled with water from which the enemy was also allowed to replenish its drinking-vessels.²

God sent down rain during the night, which caused the infidels great inconvenience by hindering their movement, yet, it revived the vanishing spirits of the Muslims by making the weather pleasant and turning the soft sand of the *wadi* (valley) into a compact surface.

This was a sign of victory which God disclosed in the following verse of the Qur'an:

“And He sent down water from the sky upon you, that thereby He might purify you, and remove from you the fear of Satan, and make strong your hearts and firm (your) feet thereby” (Qur'an 8:11).

PROPHET AS GENERAL

We find, on this occasion, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) exhibiting the marvelous qualities of an experienced military tactician, which complemented his eternal mission of delivering the universal guidance to mankind, providing yet another indication that the inspiration received by him could have only been from Almighty God.³ The way in which he organized his troops for battle, as well as his reactions to the sudden and surprise attacks by the superior enemy forces despite lacking large numbers of soldiers needs be studied to truly appreciate the prodigious military genius of the Prophet.

² *Ibid*, p. 622

³ A detailed account of the defensive and offensive measures taken by the Apostle of God at Badr can be seen in the *Hadis-I-Dif'a* by aj. General Muhammad Akbar Khan, a Pakistan general, and the *Al-Rasul al-Qa'id* by Mahmud Shit Khattab, the ex-Commander-in-chief of the Iraqi Armed Forces.

PREPARATION FOR THE FIGHTING

A booth of palm-branches was erected for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on a hill overlooking the battlefield. Thereafter, the Prophet traversed the plain and pointed out the spots to his companions where the enemy chiefs were to fall dead. As it was found later on, his predictions proved entirely correct for not a single Quraish chief was found slain at a place different from that indicated by the Prophet of God.

When the two armies came face to face, the Prophet said, “O God, here come the Quraish in their vanity and pride: they contend with You calling Your Prophet a liar.”

This was the night of Friday, the seventeenth of Ramadan. At the first of sign of morning, the entire force of the Quraish streamed out into the valley and arranged itself in the battlefield while the Muslims arrayed themselves before them in the foreground.¹

BESEECHMENT AND ENTREATY TO THE LORD

The Prophet set the ranks of his force in order and returned to the hut with Abu Bakr. Putting his head on the dust, he supplicated and beseeched God for divine assistance. He knew full well that if the victory in the battle was to go by numbers and strength, prowess and weapons of the two forces, the result was a foregone conclusion. He had no illusion, for he fully realized that the Muslims were weak and few while the enemy strong and numerous. He clearly saw the balance inclining in favour of the Quraish; and now he sought to counterbalance it with a heavier weight. Earnestly he supplicated the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who shapes all ends and the means, to

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 343-344

come to the assistance of Muslims in their hour of difficulty. He appealed to God; “O God! If You were to exterminate this small group of Muslims, You will not be worshipped on the Earth any more!” In a state of extreme exaltation, his hands raised in prayer and on bent knees supplicated the prayer: “O God! Fulfill what You had promised to me! Help us You, O God!” So lost was he in the prayer that the mantle on his shoulder fell on the ground. Abu Bakr, who was too distressed to see the Prophet of God in tears, consoled and comforted him.¹

THE TRUE POSITION AND STATION OF THE MUSLIMS

The prayer of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), although brief, speaks volumes of his pure-hearted companions, his unflinching confidence in the assistance of God in the hour of crisis, his feelings of humbleness and meekness before God and the serenity of his own heart. At the same time, the prayer sets forth, in crystal clear terms, the true position and station of the Muslims amidst the nations of the world; it brings out the value, and necessity of the people who are charged with the responsibility of taking his mission ahead. It is, in fact, a plain and clear annunciation of the responsibility lying on these people to submit in obedience to God.

The Prophet’s prayer was answered by God with a resounding victory which was beyond the bounds of every reason and probability. It was but a demonstration of the truth as well as affirmation of the true character of his followers.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) then

¹ See *Zad al-Ma’ad* and other biographies of the Apostle. Muslim relates (in *Kitab ul-Jihad wal-Siyar*) on the authority of ‘Umar b. al-Khattab that “on the day of Badr when the Apostle camped with his three hundred and nineteen companions, he turned towards the Qibla and, raising his hands, started imploring God: ‘O God! Grant me the help which You did promise me. O God! Grant me what You have promised me. O God! If this small group of Muslims is exterminated today, You will be worshipped on earth no more!’”

came back to his men before the battle and delivered a short speech stressing the merits of fighting in the way of God. In the meantime 'Utbah b. Rabi'a and his brother and son, Shayba and Waleed, stepped forward in the fashion of the Arabs. Three of the Ansar came forward to give them battle, but the Quraish asked, "Who are you?" "We are Ansar," they answered. "You are of noble blood," said the Quraish, "but send our peers, the men of our own tribe."

The Prophet now said, "Go ahead, O 'Ubayda b. al-Harith, Hamza and 'Ali: Advance! All three of you to oppose them." The Quraish then said, "Yes. You are noble and our peers."

Now 'Ubayda being the eldest, challenged 'Utbah b. Rabi'a. Hamza faced Shayba and 'Ali came full tilt against Waleed. With a swift dispatch, Hamza and 'Ali slew their opponents, but 'Ubayda and 'Utba struggled with one another. Hamza and 'Ali then made a dead set at 'Utba and did away with him. They bore away and brought 'Ubayda back to their ranks for he had been badly injured. Later on 'Ubayda died of due to excessive loss of blood.¹

THE GENERAL ATTACK

The Quraish were now filled with a renewed fury. With a cry of rage, they darted and assailed the Muslim champions whereupon the Prophet cried, "Rise for the Paradise whose breadth is equal to the heavens and the earth!"

THE FIRST MARTYR

'Umayr b. al-Humam heard the Prophet's call and asked, "Is the Paradise equal to the heavens and the earth, O Prophet of God?" "Yes," replied the Prophet. "How great it is," he said and when

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 625

the Prophet asked what had made him say that, he replied, “Nothing, O Prophet of God, but I hope that I might be among its inhabitants.” The Prophet told him that he would be among them. ‘Umayr then took some dates out of his quiver and began to eat them, but suddenly he said, “If I live till my date is over, it would mean delaying it for long.” So he threw away the dates in his hand and ran to the battlefield and fought with the enemy until he was dead. He was the first martyr on the day of Badr.¹

The Muslims fought the Meccans like a firm, united and disciplined army with the name of God on their lips. Up to that moment the Prophet had remained quite and collected, but now he charged into the ranks of the enemy. None was now braver than he, none dared engage the enemy so closely.² God then sent down his angels to assist the Muslims. The enemy suddenly seemed to be giving way to the Muslims and appeared to be driven back by a fierce charge of invisible warriors.

“When Your Lord inspired the angels (saying) I am with you to make those who believe stand firm. I will throw fear into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Then smite their necks and smite of them each finger” (Qur’an 8:12).

THE AMBITION OF TWO BROTHERS

Full of enthusiasm, everybody seemed to be bent upon outdoing others in deeds of valor and the acquisition of martyrdom. Even close friends and full brothers vied with one another to excel the other. ‘Abdur Rahman b. Auf said, “I was fighting in my row on the day of Badr, when, lo! I saw on my right and left two very young boys; and did not feel quite happy to see them on my sides.³ Suddenly, one of them asked me in a low voice, so that

¹ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. p. 345 and *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 625

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. II, p. 425

³ ‘Abdur Rahman would have expected grown up men with him could be expected to assist him in the fight.

his companion should not hear, ‘O my uncle! Show me Abu Jahl!’ I said, O my brother’s son! What have you do with him?’ He answered, ‘I have vowed before God that I shall kill him when I see him, or shall be killed by him!’ And the other boy spoke to me likewise in a low voice, so that his companion should not hear. I pointed him out to them, and they threw themselves upon him like two hawks, and struck him down. And they were the sons of ‘Afra.’¹

When Abu Jahl was killed, the Prophet of God remarked, “This is Abu Jahl, the Pharoh of this nation.”

THE GREAT VICTORY

The day of Badr drew towards its close with the Muslims witnessing success and the infidels being trampled in the dust. On this occasion the Prophet paid homage to God, saying: “Praise be to Allah who fulfilled His promise, and helped His servant, and alone routed all the enemies.”

That was exactly what had happened, for the Qur’an also says:

“Allah had given you the victory at Badr, when you were contemptible. So observe your duty to Allah in order that you may be thankful” (Qur’an 3:123).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered that the dead among the infidels should be thrown into a pit. As the Muslims threw them in it, the Prophet went there and said standing over the pit, “O people of the pit, did you find that what your Lord said is true? For I have found that what my God promised me to be true.”²

¹ *Sahihaian*, The incident quoted here has been taken from *Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Maghazi*, see *Gazwa Badr. Ibn Kathir*, Vol. II, p. 444.

² *Bukhari*, on the authority of Bara b. ‘Azib

On the day of Badr, seventy infidels were slain and an equal number were taken captive. Casualties among the Muslims were fourteen, six belonging to the Muhajirin and eight to the Ansar.¹

EFFECTS OF THE VICTORY OF BADR

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) returned to Medina at the head of victorious army. The enemies of Islam were appalled and disheartened by the victory at Badr: the Prophet's prestige rose in Medina and his influence gained a hold upon the surrounding district. A large number of persons who had been hesitant in Medina accepted the faith of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

'Abdallah b. Rawaha was one of the two persons sent by the Prophet to Medina in advance, before he returned to the city. He gave the good news to the people, saying, "Rejoice, O Ansar for the Prophet of God is safe and infidels have been killed and captured." He enumerated the names of the Qaurayshites nobles accompanied him singing song of joy; some took the news to be true while others were confounded. Then the Prophet returned to Medina followed by the prisoners of war with the Prophet's slave Shuqran keeping an eye on them.² When the Prophet reached Ruha, the Muslims met and congratulated him and his companions on the victory God had given him.

The defeat suffered by the polytheists plunged Mecca into a gloom: there was not a house in the city which did not go into mourning.³ The Meccans stood aghast and agitated. Abu Sufyan swore that until he had fought with the Prophet again he would not take a bath. The suppressed Muslims of Mecca, on the other

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. II, p. 463

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. II, pp. 470-73

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, pp. 647-48

had, breathed a sigh of relief and felt elated.

TIES OF BLOOD OR FAITH

One of the captives was Abu ‘Aziz b. ‘Umayr. b. Hashim, a full brother of Mus’ab b. ‘Umayr. The two brother were the standard bearers of the rival armies.

Mus’ab b. ‘Umyr passed by his brother when an Ansari young man was tying up the hands of Abu ‘Aziz b. ‘Umayr. Mus’ab called out, “Bind him fast, for his mother is sufficiently rich; perhaps she would pay a handsome ransom.”

Turning to Mus’ab in amazement, Abu ‘Aziz b. ‘Umyr said, “Brother, is it you to give this counsel?” “You are not my brother”, replied ‘Umayr, “he is my brother who is tying up your hands.”

TREATMENT OF THE CAPTIVES

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ordered his followers to treat the prisoners generously. He said, “Deal kindly with them.” Abu ‘Aziz b. ‘Umayr relates that he was lodged with an Ansari family after being brought from Badr. They gave him bread for the morning and evening meals but themselves took only dates as ordered by the messenger of God. If anybody had a morsel of bread, he gave it to Abu ‘Aziz although he felt ashamed and refused it, but they returned it untouched and insisted on his taking it.¹

RANSOM OF THE PRISONERS

The Prophet accepted ransom for the prisoners according to their means; the Quraishi kinsmen of the captives paid sums of

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. II, p. 475

money for their captives, while those who could not pay any ransom were set free without any payment. The Prophet's uncle 'Abbas b. 'Abdul Muttalib, his cousin, 'Aqil b. Abi Talib,¹ his son-in-law, Abul 'As b. Ar-Rab'i, who was married to his daughter Zaynab, were among the prisoners of war but none was shown any favour; all were treated like other captives.

There were some prisoners who were unable to pay any ransom. But as they were literate they were allowed to earn their freedom by teaching the art of reading to the children of Ansar,² ten children being taught by every prisoner.³ Zaid b. Thabit was one of those who had been taught by the captives of Badr. The importance attached to edification and enlightenment by the Prophet of Islam as exemplified by his decision on this occasion needs no further explanation.

OTHER EXPEDITIONS

The ironclad oath of Abu Sufyan, as mentioned earlier, bound him to refrain from even splashing water over his head until he had wreaked his vengeance on the Muslims. He came to Medina with two hundred raiders to acquit himself of his oath, and called upon Sallam b. Mishkam, the chief of the Jewish tribe of Bani an-Nadir, who entertained him with food and drink and also gave the information he desired about Medina. Thereupon Abu Sufyan succeeded in getting away after killing two of the Ansars.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) got a warning of the raiders and went out in their pursuit. Abu Sufyan eluded the Prophet but was obliged to throw away a good deal of his provisions consisting of foodgrains, especially parched

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p.3

² *Musnad Ahmad b. Hanbal*, Vol. I, p. 247

³ *Tabaqat ibn S'ad*, vol. II, p. 14

corn or *al-sawiq*, and hence the expedition goes by its name.¹

The Jews of Medina who first broke their covenant with the Prophet were Banu Qaynuqa. They contended with the Muslims and spoke slightly of the Prophet. Ultimately, the Prophet besieged them—the siege lasting for fifteen nights—until Banu Qaynuqa surrendered unconditionally. The siege was raised on the recommendation of ‘Abdallah b. Ubayy, the leader of the hypocrites.²

Banu Qaynuqa conducted a market in Medina and practised crafts such as that of the goldsmith.³ They were forced to leave the city although the numbers who could bear arms among them was seven hundred.

KA’B B. ASHRAF MEETS HIS DOOM

Ka’b b. Ashraf was a prominent leader of the Jews. An implacable enemy of Islam, he always did his utmost to get the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) into trouble. He was also a poet of considerable standing, availing his talents to compose and recite derogatory verses against the honour of Muslim women—an act intolerable enough to try one’s patience. Immediately after the battle of Badr he went all the way to Mecca to cry out vengeance with inflammatory verses and stirred up the Quraish to even the score of their defeat at Badr. Nevertheless, he returned to Madina where, in his indomitable conceit, he continued his mischievous propaganda against Islam. When the Prophet heard about his return to Medina, he said to his companions, “Ka’b b. Ashraf had offended God and His Prophet. Who will rid me of him?” A few

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 144-45

² *Ibid*, pp. 47-49

³ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 348

person¹ belonging to the Ansars immediately offered their services and killed that enemy of God.²

¹ Muhammad b. Maslamah accompanied by four of his friends

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. 348

THE BATTLE OF UHUD

REVENGE - A BINDING OBLIGATION

The news of the disaster at Badr in which a number of the nobles from the tribes of Quraish had fallen and the return of the survivors to Mecca in a complete state of confusion and disorder was received with a dismay that completely bewildered the Quraish. It had proved an unimaginable catastrophe for them. All those whose fathers, sons or brothers had been killed at Badr met Abu Sufyan and others who had merchandise in the caravan which was brought back safely to Mecca. It was agreed to set aside the profits of the caravan in order to prepare themselves for a new war against the Muslims. The poets, as usual, began inciting the people with their songs of vengeance. To the pagan Arabs, the shedding of the blood of their tribesmen necessitated an effort to avenge those killed in order to vindicate their honour.

A well-equipped army set out from Mecca to fight the prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his companions in the middle of Shawwal, 3 A.H.¹ The Quraish had mustered an army of three thousand soldiers consisting of their own warriors and others from surrounding tribes that agreed to join them. Their women went with them riding their own camels in order to stir their valour and prevent them from taking to flight.¹ The nobles of the Quraish also took their wives with them. The army advanced in small stages and camped near the gates of Medina. The Prophet's plan was to remain in the city, leaving the invaders alone, and to fight only when they decided to enter the city. He was not for going out of the city to face the enemy in the battlefield. Abdallah b. Ubayy, too, agreed with

¹ "after Hijri". The Muslims began their calendar after the famous "Hijrah" from Mecca to Medina, hence everything that happened after that time is dated as "After Hijri".

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 60-62

the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), but some of the Muslims who had somehow missed the opportunity of engaging the enemy at Badr were more enthusiastic. They said, "O Prophet of Allah, let us go forth and smite our foes, otherwise they would think that we fear to leave the city and face them." While they kept on urging the Prophet in this way, he went into his house and put on his coat of armour. The young men who had been keen on meeting the enemy outside the city admonished themselves for their over-eagerness. Realizing their hastiness, they begged the Prophet to follow his first counsel for they may have been mistaken in persuading him against his will. "If you wish to remain inside the city", they said, "we will not oppose you." However, the Prophet of God replied, "It befits not a prophet, when once he had put on the armour, to take it off until he has fought."¹

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) then marched out with a thousand man army, yet, he had not gone far away when 'Abdallah b. Ubayy withdrew with a third of the army's men. Abdallah said to his comrades, "He disregarded my advice, but accepted theirs"²

THE PROPHET TAKES POSITION

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) marched into the gorge of mount Uhud, about three kilometers to the north of Medina, and took up his position with the mountain to his back.³ He also instructed his men. "Let none of you fight until I give you the word."

The Prophet then drew up his troops for battle, which numbered 700 men in all. On the adjoining mountain he established 50

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 63

² *Ibid*, p. 63

³ To get a clear picture of the disposition of troops, see *The Battlefield of the Prophet Muhammad* by Dr. Muhammad Hamid Ullah, pp. 24-25.

archers under ‘Abdallah b. Jubayr and instructed them to keep the enemy cavalry away, for, he said, in no case should they be allowed to come on the Muslims from the rear whether the Muslims won the day or lost it.¹ “Abandon not your position, “ he commanded them sternly, “even if the birds snatch up these men.”²

THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE YOUNGSTERS

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had sent back two boys, Samura b. Jundub and Rafi’ b. Khadij, as they were both fifteen years of age. Rafi’ was later allowed by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to join the troops on the recommendation of his father that he was a good archer. When Samura’s turn came and he was asked to go back, he pleaded with the Prophet that he had allowed Rafi’ to join the army although he was stronger than Rafi. Thereupon the two boys had a bout of wrestling in which Samura defeated Rafi, and he was also allowed to go the battle.³

THE FIRST PHASE OF ACTION

The battle began and each side hurled itself against the other, while a group of women, headed by the blood-thirsty Hind, played their tambourines while singing in order to urge the Quraish troops to deeds of valor. A general engagement ensued and the battle grew hot. Abu Dujana fought with the Prophet’s sword, killing everybody who came up against him, and advanced deep into the enemy’s ranks.⁴

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 66

² *Zad Al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 349 and Bukhari

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 66

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 67-68

HAMZA AND MUS'AB B. 'UMAYR KILLED

Hamza fought gallantly and killed a number of notable Quraish leaders. Nobody was able to stand his dashing charge, however, Wahshi, the slave of Jubayr b. Mu'tim, was watching the movements of Hamza, for he had been promised freedom by his master on the condition that he killed Hamza. Jubayr's uncle Tu'ayma had been killed by Hamza at Badr, while Hind had also urged Jubayr to get Hamza killed by Wahsi. At last Wahshi got his chance and took aim at Hamza while he was preoccupied in a fight with another soldier. Wahshi, an expert javelin thrower, launched his javelin at Hamza, piercing the lower part of his body. Hamza staggered, then collapsed and dropped dead.¹

Meanwhile, Mus'ab b. 'Umayr had entrenched himself in the defense of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and exhibited singular courage in the thick of the battle by managing to keep the attacking infidels at bay. He fell, at last, while nobly discharging the duty he owed to Allah and His Messenger.²

VICTORY OF THE MUSLIMS

Allah fulfilled the promise He had made to the Muslims. The history of Badr was repeated once again; a number of the Quraish nobles fell in succession and their troops took to their heels. The Muslims found Hind and her companions abandoning their songs and running away, while tucking up their garments.³

THE TABLE TURNS ON THE MUSLIMS

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 70-72

² *Ibid*, p.73

³ *Ibid*, p.77

The Quraish had suffered an obvious rout. The ignominious retreat of the enemy troops and their women accompanying them taking to their heels made the archers certain of their victory. Uttering shouts of glee, they deserted their post to despoil the enemy camp. ‘Abdallah b. Jubyr, the leader of the archers, reminded his men of the command given by the Prophet, but none of them were prepared to listen him, except for a handful. So certain were they of their victory that return of the enemy, which was running for its life, seemed inconceivable to them. Then, the situation changed. No longer obstructed by the potential of flurry of arrows, the Meccan cavalry found its way to the unprotected rear of the Muslim army.¹

The standard bearers of the Quraish had been killed; their standard was lying in the dust and nobody dared come near it. Suddenly, the Quraish came smashing through the Muslims rear and someone called out: “Ha, Muhammad [may Allah exalt his mention] has been killed.” The Muslim troops, bounded upon the fugitives, turned back to face the enemy in the rear; the decamping Quraish soldiers were emboldened and returned to resume their attack on the Muslims. The situation now became extremely critical for the Muslims; the enemy was bent upon taking full advantage of the opportunity afforded to it.

The surprise and confusion overtaking Muslims was as sudden as the two-pronged attack by the Meccans was violent. The Quraish’s troops led by ‘Abdallah b. Qumiyah and ‘Utbah b. Abi Waqqas made a bold charge and reached close to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The Muslim troops began to waiver, several were honoured with martyrdom; and the Prophet was hit with a stone. He fell on his side, while one of his front teeth was smashed, his face was scored, and his lip was injured. The blood which was running down his face was wiped by the Prophet, while he said, “How

¹ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 350

can a people prosper who have stained their prophets' face with blood while he only summoned them to the worship of their Lord?"²

The majority of the Muslim soldiers had been scattered and nobody knew where the Prophet was. 'Ali took hold of the Prophet's hand while Talha b. Ubaydullah lifted him up until the Prophet got on his feet. Malik b. Sinan was so carried away that he even licked the blood flowing from the Prophet's face.

The Muslims had actually neither fled away nor had they been completely defeated. The flanks of their army had folded up so they were forced to retreat in order to gather their strength for facing the new situation. It was, no doubt, a day of test and trial for the Muslims in which they lost a number of their gallant warriors and angelic comrades of the Prophet, but all this had come to pass because of the mistake of the archers who had exposed the Muslim flank. They had disobeyed the Prophet by abandoning the post on which the Prophet had stationed them.

After this Allah revealed to them the following verses concerning the event:

"Allah verily made good His promise unto you when you routed them by His leave, until (the moment) when your courage failed you, and you disagreed about the order and you disobeyed, after He had shown you that for which you longed. Some of you desired this world and some of you the Hereafter. Therefore He made you flee from them, that He might try you. Yet now He has forgiven you. Allah is a Lord of kindness to believers" (Qur'an 3:152).

THE LOVING COMPANIONS

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 78-80

The battle of Uhud also gave occasion to the reflection of worthiness and ardent affection of the companions for the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Two rings from the metal chain strap of the helmet put on by the Prophet had been driven into his cheek. Abu 'Ubayda b. al-Jarrah pulled out one of the rings and one of his front teeth dropped out; he pulled out another ring and another tooth dropped out; Abu Dujana leaned over the Prophet to shield him from arrows until many were stuck in his back. S'ad b. Abi Waqqas stood by the Prophet shooting arrows in his defense, while the Prophet handed him the arrows one by one, saying, "Shoot, may my father and my mother be ransomed for you."¹

Qataba b. al-Nu'man got a blow on his face which made one of his eyes come out of its socket. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) restored it to its place with his own hand and it was so completely healed that it became stronger than his other eye.²

The blood-crazy infidels surged toward the Prophet; they were ready to die a hundred times in order to kill the Prophet, but God had willed otherwise. Ten of his companions laid down their lives, one by one, defending him. Talha b. 'Ubaydullah protected the Prophet from the arrows shot by the enemy with his hands, until his fingers bled profusely and his hands were paralyzed. The Prophet wanted to climb up the mountain. He tried but could not do so due to the weakness caused by his injuries. Talha b. 'Ubaydullah squatted beneath him and helped him to climb up the rock. The Prophet performed the noon-prayer on the rock, while sitting because of the wounds he had received.³

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 80-82, Bukhari

² *Ibid*, p.82

³ *Ibid*, p. 67

When the Muslims had been taken by surprise and dispersed by the enemy, horsemen prodding them on the one side with the foot-soldiers on the other, Anas b. an-Nadri continued to fight valiantly; advancing far into ranks. Sa'ad b. Mu'ad happened to pass by him and asked him, "Where do you intend to go?" Anas b. an-Nadr replied, "S'ad, I smell the fragrance of paradise near the hill of Uhud."⁴

Anas b. an-Nadr passed by a few of the Ansar and Muhajirin who were sitting gloomly. He asked them, "What makes you sit there?" "The Prophet of God has gone to glory," they replied. "Then what's the use of living after him?" answered Anas b. An-Nadr, "Come, let us die for what the Prophet gave his life." Anas then advanced to make a dead set at the enemy and died fighting like a hero. His nephew, Anas b. Malik, later on counted seventy wounds, which his uncle had received that day. Actually, it was difficult to recognize the corpse of Anas b. An-Nadr but his sister identified him by a special mark on the tip of one of his fingers.¹

Ziyad b. As-Sakan and five others of the Ansar were holding the enemy back from the Prophet. The friends of Ziyad fought and died, man by man, and Ziyad became disabled by numerous wounds. The Prophet asked certain persons to bring Ziyad near him and made his foot a support for Ziyad's head. Ziyad died in that condition keeping his cheeks on the Prophet's foot.²

'Amr b. al-Jamuh had a lame leg. He had four sons, all of them were young and sturdy, and each was anxious for taking part in the battle. On the day of Uhud, 'Amr b. al-Jamuh expressed his desire to go to the battlefield, but his sons requested him to remain at home, saying that God has excused him. He called

⁴ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 350

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 83

² *Ibid*, p. 81

upon the Prophet and told him that this sons wanted to prevent him from taking part in the Jihad.³ “Yet, by God, I wish to be slain so that I may stroll lamely in the paradise,” said ‘Amr b. al-Jamuh. The Prophet replied, “God has not made Jihad incumbent on you;” and to his sons he said, “What is the harm if you allow him to go?” Amr b. al-Jamuh went with the army and was killed in the battle.⁴

Zayd b. Thabit related that on the day of Uhud, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked him to seek out S’ad b. ar-Rab’i and ask S’ad, after conveying his greetings to him, how he felt at the moment. Zayd searched for S’ad b. ar-Rab’i and found him lying wounded among the slain breathing his last. Zayd counted seventy cuts from swords, arrows and javelins on his body. Zayd conveyed the message of the Prophet to S’ad b. ar-Rab’i to which he replied, “Convey my greetings to the Prophet and tell him that I smell the fragrance of the Paradise.” “And tell my people,” continued S’ad b. ar-Rab’i, “you would have no excuse before God if the enemy lays its hand on the Prophet of God while you are still alive and breathing.” S’ad had hardly finished his message when he relinquished his life.¹

Before departing for the battle of Uhud, ‘Abdallah b. Jahsh had thus implored God, “Upon Your Word, O God, tomorrow I shall fight the enemy. They may slay me, then rip up my belly and cut off my nose and ears. Then You should ask me: For what had it happened? And I would give the reply: ‘For You, my Lord.’”²

MUSLIMS REGAIN CONFIDENCE

³ Lit. An effort or striving: Fighting for the sake of God. It may be defensive or offensive, but solely for a cause just and right.

⁴ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, vol. I, p. 353

¹ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, vol. I, p. 353

² *Ibid*

A new life was put into the Muslims when they found that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was still alive. Many of them gathered round him and took him towards a secluded, narrow valley. Ubayy b. Khalaf caught up with the Prophet's party and said, "Muhammad, (may Allah exalt his mention) if you escape, I will be doomed, " The Prophet, however, asked his companions to let him alone, but when Ubayy insisted on coming near the Prophet he took the lance from one of his companions. Then, turning to face him, the Prophet thrust it in the neck of Ubayy b. Khalaff who fell from his going head over heels.³

On reaching the mouth of the secluded, narrow valley, 'Ali brought water in his shield and Fatimah washed the blood from the Prophet's face. When his wounds continued bleeding, 'Ali burnt a piece of mat and dressed the wounds of the Prophet with its ash and the bleeding stopped.⁴

'Aisha and Umm Sulaym brought drinking water on their backs in leather bags for the wounded¹ while Umm Sulaym drew water for them.²

Hind b. 'Utbah and the women with her mutilated the dead bodies of Muslims and cut off their ears and noses. Hind cut out Hamza's liver and chewed it, but when she could not swallow it, she threw it away.

Before ordering his army to retire, Abu Sufyan ascended a hillock and shouted, "Victory in war goes by turns: one wins today and the other tomorrow. Glory be to Hubal." The Prophet told 'Umar to get up and say in reply, "God is the Highest and

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 84

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 85, Bukhari and Muslim, section, Battle of Uhud

¹ *Bukhari*, Section, Battle of Uhud

² *Ibid*

Most Majestic; None exists besides Him. Our dead are in paradise and yours in hell.”³ Abu Sufayan came out with the reply, “We have the idol ‘Uzza while you have none.” The Prophet again directed his companions to say in reply: “Allah is our protector, but you have none.”⁴

Before Abu Sufyan departed, he called out, “We shall meet again at Badr next year.” Thereupon the Prophet asked a companion to say, “Yes, it is an appointment between us.”⁵

The people searched for their dead in order to give them a proper burial. The Prophet was visibly moved by the death of Hamza, his uncle and foster-brother who had always been a source of strength to him.

THE EXEMPLARY ENDURANCE

Safia bint ‘Abdul Muttalib was the full-sister of Hamza. When she came forward to see her brother, the Prophet asked her son, Zubair b. al-Awwan to send her back so that she might not see her brother’s dead body that had been mutilated. Accordingly Zubair said to her, “Mother, the Prophet wants you to go back.” She replied, “Why? I know that my brother has been mutilated but it was for the sake of God. I hope for a goodly return from Him and shall be patient, if God wills.” She went to see her brother and prayed for him. Then the Prophet ordered that he should be buried in Uhud, where his grave still exists to this day.¹

BURIAL OF MUS’AB B. Umayr

The standard bearer of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah

³ *Ibn Hihsam*, Vol. II, p. 91

⁴ *Bukhari*, Section, Battle of Uhud

⁵ *Ibn Hihsam*, Vol. II, p. 94

¹ *Ibn Hihsam*, Vol. II, p. 97

be upon him) on the day of Uhud was Mus'ab b. Umayr. Before his conversion to Islam he was one of the best dressed young men of Quraish, brought up in the lap of luxury. Only a piece of coarse cloth could be found as a shroud for his burial when he was slain in the battle of Uhud. The cloth was so small that when his head covered, his feet appeared and when his feet were covered his head was exposed; so the Prophet said, "Cover his head and put some brushes over his feet."²

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) directed the martyrs to be shrouded in pairs and ordered the lowering of the corpse of that martyr first in the grave who had memorized more of the Qur'an. While the martyrs were being buried, he said, "I shall be a witness for them on the Day of Resurrection." He also ordered to them to be buried in the condition in which they had died.³

LOVING REGARD FOR THE PROPHET

On their way back to their homes, certain Muslims passed by a woman whose husband, brother and father had been killed at Uhud. When she was told of their death she asked, "Tell me first about the Prophet?" The people replied, "Thanks God, the Prophet is safe." But she was not satisfied and asked whether she could see the Prophet herself. When the people brought her to the Prophet she said, "Now that you are safe, every adversity is gone."¹

² *Bukhari*, Section, Battle of Uhud

³ *Bukhari*, Battle of Uhud. There is no difference of opinion in regard to burying the martyrs, without washing them, so that they present themselves before God in the condition they were slain. As for the burial service, Imam Malik, Imam Shafe'i and Imam Ahmad do not consider it necessary while Imam Abu Hanifa (and others like Imam Awza'i, Sufyan Thauri, Ishaq b. Ruhaway) say that the burial service should be performed. Imam Ahmad also relates a Tradition about the offering of burial service over the martyrs. *Bukhari* has also related a Tradition on the authority of 'Uqbah b. Amir that once the Prophet went to Uhud and recited the burial service for the martyrs.

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 99

DEVOTION AND FAITHFULNESS

The Meccan's army had departed from Uhud but they had not gone far away when the people were heard complaining against one another and accusing their leaders of withdrawing without pressing home their advantage. On the other hand, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) decided the very next day, which was Sunday, to set out in pursuit of the retreating enemy. It was the time when most of the Muslims were tired and wounded, but the Prophet sent a person to announce that everybody who had been present in the battle of Uhud should get ready to pursue the enemy. None demurred, none protested; every Muslim who had fought at Uhud the day before followed the Prophet on his way out of Madina in spite of his fatigue and wounds. The Prophet camped with his followers at Hamra al-Asad, about 13 kilometers from Madina, where he remained from Monday until Wednesday. The Prophet returned when there was no more possibility of the enemy's return.² The dutiful compliance to the Prophet's command by his companions at this difficult hour exhibited their love for him, which was felt all too deeply and has been mentioned by God through the following verses of the Qur'an:

*“As for those who heard the call of Allah and His Messenger
after the harm befell them (in the fight); for such of them as do
right and ward off (evil), there is great reward,
Those unto whom men said: Lo! The people have gathered
against you, therefore fear them. (The threat of danger) but
increased the faith of them and they cried; Allah is sufficient for
us!*

*Most excellent is He in whom we trust!
So they returned with grace and favor from Allah, and no harm
touched them. They followed the good pleasure of Allah and
Allah is of infinite bounty.*

² *Ibid*

*It is only the devil who would make (men) fear his partisans.
Fear them not; Fear Me, if you are true believers” (Qur’an
3:172-75).*

MORE PRECIOUS THAN THEIR OWN LIVES

In the third year after Hijrah, the tribes of ‘Adal and Qara sent an ambassador to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asking for scholars who could be sent to teach them the rudiments of faith. The Prophet sent them six of his companions, including ‘Asim b. Thabith, Khubayb b. ‘Adiy and Zayd b. Dathinna. When this party reached Ar-Raji, a place between ‘Usfan and Mecca, the two tribes treacherously fell on them. The Muslims took out their swords to fight them but the assailants swore by God that they would not kill them. Three Muslims replied that they could not accept any undertaking given by the pagans; so they fought and were killed. The remaining three, Zayd, Khubayb and ‘Abdallh b. Tariq surrendered. The last companion broke loose temporarily during the return trip, but was later killed by one of the polytheists, while the remaining two were sold to the Quraish. Hujayr b. Abu Ihab bought Khubayb to even the score of his father Ihab and Zayd was purchase by Safawan b. Umayya to have his revenge for Umayya b. Khalaf.

When Zayd was taken out for execution, a number of the Quraish including Abu Sufyan gathered to witness the barbaric spectacle. Abu Sufyan asked Zayd, “Verily, for God’s sake, O Zayd, don’t you wish that Muhammad had now been in your place and you with family?” “By God,” replied Zayd, “I don’t wish Muhammad (May Allah exalt his mention) to be hurt even by a thorn while I should be in sweet repose with my family.” Thereupon Abu Sufyan remarked, “I have never seen any man so much adored as Muhammad (may Allah exalt his mention) is

loved by his companions.” Zayd was killed after that.¹

Then they brought Khubayb to be crucified. He asked his executioners to allow him to offer two *rak'ats* of prayer. Having performed the prayers in complete repose, Khubayb said to them, “Were it not that you would think that I only extended my prayer out of fear of death I would have prolonged my prayer.” Then he recited these verses:

“I fear not which side I fall depart; It's all for God who will bless the limbs taken part.” Khubayb was stricken dead with the song of love on his lips.²

BI'R MA'UNA

Another act of treachery took place shortly thereafter. A tribal chief, 'Amir b. Malik., expressed the desire to have the doctrines of Islam explained to his people. The Prophet deputed 70 persons, some of whom were his eminent companions, but when they reached the place called Bi'r Ma'una, the tribesmen of Banu Sulayman, Usayya, Ri'l and Dhakwan ambushed the party. The Muslims fought bravely and all but one was killed. Ka'b b. Zayd returned to tell the story. He died in the Battle of Teachers.³

DYING DECLARATION OF A MARTYR

One of the Muslims who was killed treacherously on this occasion was Haram b. Milhan. The words uttered by him at the time of his death brought about the conversion of his killer Jabbar b. Salma to Islam. Jabbar used to relate later that what led him to accept Islam was that he attacked a man with his

¹ *Ibn Hisham* Vol. II, pp. 169-76, *Bukhari, Kitab ul-Maghazi*

² *Ibn Hisham* Vol. II, pp. 174

³ *Bukhari, Muslim and Ibn Hihsam*, Vol. II, p. 186

spear, and when he saw the point of his spear coming out of his chest, he also heard him crying, "By the Lord of Ka'ba, I have succeeded!" Jabbar further says that he wondered what sort of success it was. Was the man not killed by him? Jabbar enquired from others who knew him that the man had meant martyrdom and thus he was convinced that his victim had really been successful.¹

EXPULSION OF BANU AN-NADIR

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) approached Banu an-Nadir to demand a contribution to be paid as blood-money to the Bani 'Amir, since two men had been killed inadvertently by the lone survivor of Bi'r Man'ua. Banu an-Nadir, being one of the two influential tribes of the Jews settled in Medina, were in alliance with Bani 'Amir and were thus liable to pay the bloodwit. They feigned willingness to accept the demand with pleasure, but kept themselves busy plotting against the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). While the Prophet was asked to make himself comfortable by the side of a wall of one of their houses, they took counsel with one another apart, saying; "Never would you get such a golden chance. If some one of us drops a rock on him from the top of the house, we shall all get rid of him." Abu Bakr, 'Ali and 'Umar and a few more companions were with the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on this occasion.

God informed the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) of the treacherous plan of the Jews. He went back to Medina and ordered to make preparations for war against the Bnu an-Nadir. Thus, the Prophet came upon them in Rabi'ul-Awwal, 4 A.H. The siege of Banu an-Nadir lasted for six nights while God cast terror in the hearts of the Jews. They requested

¹ *Ibn Hihsam*, Vol. II, p. 187

the Prophet that if he agreed to spare their lives they would quit the city with their belongings except their arms. The offer was accepted and Banu an-Nadir departed from Madina after destroying their houses and loading all that they could on their camels.¹

The *Suratul-Hashr* (Surat of Exile) in the Qur'an calls attention to the banishment of Banu an-Nadir:

“He it is Who has caused those of the People of the Scripture who disbelieved to go forth from their homes unto the first exile. You deemed not that they would go forth, while they deemed that their strongholds would protect them from Allah. But Allah reached them from a place whereof they reckoned not, and cast terror in their hearts so that they ruined their house with their own hands and the hands of the believers. So learn a lesson. O you who have eyes!” (Qur'an 59:2).

Many of these exiles settled in Khaybar, the Jews' centre in the north of Hijaz, others went away to the far off Syria, and the Muslims got rid of that sneaky dark corner of deception in their midst without having to meet the Jews in an open fight. The lands and groves left by the Jews were divided up among the first Meccan emigrants.

THE RIGHT OF DHAT-UR-RIQ'A

In the fourth year of the Hijrah, the Prophet of God decided to make a raid into Najd. With six of his companions, of whom Abu Musa al-Ash'ari was one, he made for an oasis in that area. The party had to cover the distance mostly on foot, as only one camel was at their service. The incursion was called Dhat-ur-Riq'a as the companions taking part in the expedition had to

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91

bandage their injured feet and toes.²

The Prophet's party approached the enemy, but there was no fighting, for each feared the other. The Prophet led the prayer of fear in this expedition.¹

WHO CAN NOW SAVE YOU?

While the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was on his way back to Medina, he happened to lie down to take rest under the shade of a thicket of acacia trees after hanging his sword to a branch.

Jabir related that he was taking a nap along with his friends when they heard the Prophet calling them. They saw a Bedouin sitting by the side of the Prophet and when they went to him, he said, "I was sleeping when this man came and took hold of my sword. As I woke I saw him with my sword drawn over my head, and he was asking me, 'Who can now save you from me?'" I replied, "Allah. Now he is sitting before you." The Prophet did not, however, punish the Bedouin.²

EXPEDITION WITHOUT FIGHTING

The same year, in Sh'aban, the Prophet went forth to Badr to keep his appointment with Abu Sufyan at Uhud. He remained at Badr for eight days with a large force, waiting the arrival of the Meccan army. Abu Sufyan did come out of Mecca to vindicate his call, but he did not venture to advance more than a few miles in the desert. He persuaded his men to return since it was a season of drought in which his people were in a bad shape. There was thus no fighting and the Muslims returned with their

² *Bukhari*, Chap. Expedition of Dhat'ur-Riq'a

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 204

² *Bukhari*, Chap. Expedition of Dhat'ur-Riq'a

prestige and morale higher than before.

Another expedition of Dumatul-Jandal was undertaken by the Prophet a few months later. But the Muslim returned to Medina without any fighting.³

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 209-213

THE BATTLE OF TRENCHES

The battle of Trenches, or, of the Clans¹, as it is called sometimes, took place in the month of Shawwal, 5 A.H. The battle was fought with great difficulties and overcome with comparable courage. It forged and tested the fortitude and patience of the Muslims that would later prove to be of immense benefit to them not only in winning over the Arabian Peninsula to their faith but also in taking its message to the distant lands. It was a decisive conflict between Islam and disbelief, or between light and darkness, whereby Muslims were put to the most crucial trials never ever experienced before.

“When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when eyes grew wild and hearts reached to the throats, and you were imagining vain thoughts concerning Allah. There were the believers sorely tried, and shaken with mighty shock” (Qur’an 33:10-11).

The Jews were the real instigators of hostilities leading to the Battle of Trenches. Certain persons belonging to Bani an-Nadir and Bani Wa’il, who made no secret to see the Muslims eliminated, called upon the Quraish of Mecca and invited them to annihilate the Muslims altogether. At first, the Quraish did not show much interest in the proposal, for they had already twice exchanged and measured swords with the Muslims. But the Jews painted a rosy picture of the affair and promised the support of all the Jewish settlements in Arabia for getting rid of the Muslims once and for all. The Quraish ultimately agreed to their suggestion. The deputation of the Jews then went to the great desert tribe of Ghaffan and urged them to join in the expedition for the destruction of Yathrib. They called upon all the clans of Ghatfan, assiduously inviting them to join the

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 214

Quraish in their combined drive against Islam.¹

An alliance was thus formed between the Quraish, the Jews and the Ghatfan to wage a total war against the Muslims. An important clause of the agreement made for the venture was that the Ghatfan would muster six thousand soldiers for the military operations while the Jews would give them a whole year's harvest of Khaybar to compensate for the expenses incurred by them. The Quraish, on their part, agreed to contribute four thousand combatants. A strong army of ten thousand was thus mobilized and Abu Sufyan assumed command of the combined force.²

WISDOM: A LOST PROPERTY OF THE MUSLIMS

When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) received news of the Jews' design to wipe the Muslims out of existence, he conferred with his companions on how to take the threat. It was decided that they launch a defensive war resisting the attack of the enemy on the city instead of facing the coalition in a pitched battle outside Medina. So the Apostle assembled a force of three thousand armed men in defense of the city.

A Persian companion, called Salman, advised to dig a trench along the side of Medina which was laid open to cavalry attack.³ This advice was well-known to the Iranians.⁴ Salman is reported to have said, "Apostle of God, when we feared a charge by the cavalry we used to dig trenches to keep the invaders at bay."

The Apostle agreed to his suggestion and decided to have

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 214-15

² *Ibid.*, pp. 219-20

³ *Ibid.*, p. 224

⁴ Khandaq, as the trench is called, is the Arabicised form of the Persian Khandak and Kandak.

trenches dug in the open ground lying to the north of Medina. The city was exposed only on that side and was well protected to the west, south and east by clumped plantations, volcanic rocky plains and granite hills, presenting a considerable obstacle to the progress of a mounted army.¹

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) marked the planned ditch and assigned forty cubits of digging to every batch of ten persons.² The length of the trench was about five thousand cubits, its depth varied between seven to ten cubits and the width was normally nine cubits or a little more.³

ENTHUSIASM AND THE COOPERATIVE SPIRIT

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself helped the parties digging the portions of trench allotted to them. Although the winter season that had set in was extremely harsh⁴ and the impoverished Muslims had but little provisions to satisfy their craving for hunger, the work proceeded smoothly owing to the enthusiasm and perseverance of the volunteers.

Abu Talha relates that once when he was exhausted by hunger, he complained to the Apostle and showed his belly on which he had tied a slab of stone for allaying the uneasy sensation. The Apostle of God then showed him his own belly on which he had tied two slabs of rock.⁵

But, everybody was happy and cheerful in spite of these

¹ The trench lay in the north of the city, its eastern end began at Harrata Waqim and extended up to valley of Bathan where the basalt plain of the west begins (Abdul Quddus Ansari, *Athar al-Madina*).

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, p. 192

³ Ghazwah Ahzab by Ahmad Ba-Shum'il

⁴ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 216

⁵ *Mishkat al-Masabih*, Vol. II, p. 448. It was a custom among the Arabs that when they felt unbearable pangs of hunger, they used to tie a slab of rock on their bellies in order to allay the uneasy sensation and to be able to do their work.

deprivations. The Apostle's companions sang songs of pride⁶ and chanted praises of God to keep themselves busy in their task without a word of complaint from their lips.

Anas related that once the Apostle came to the place where they were digging the trench. He saw the Ansar and the Muhajirrin working hard to complete their work despite the piercing coldness of the chilly morning, for they had neither slaves nor servants to dig the trench for them. Seeing how they were laboring with their empty stomachs, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "O Allah, life is truly the life of hereafter; so pardon the Ansar and the Muhajirin."

Overjoyed to hear the Apostle invoking forgiveness for them, the people present there said in reply: "It is we who have pledged to Muhammad, to fight in Jihad till the spark of life is imbued."¹

Anas further said that if one of them happened to procure a handful of barely, he used to grind and mix it with a little fat to be shared by all, enduring its offensive smell and taste in the process.

MIRACLE PREDICTING A BRIGHT FUTURE

A large rock was causing great difficulty in digging the trench, for the pick mattock could not break it. When the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was informed he went down into the trench and gave such a blow with the pickax that one-third of the rock was hewed asunder. Thereupon the Prophet said, "Glory be to God, the keys of Syria have been given to me." With the second blow of the pick, the Prophet hewed another one-third of the rock and said, "Glory be to God, the

⁶ Called Rajz

¹ Bukhari, *Kitab ul-Mughazi*, Chap. *Ghazwatul Khandaq*

keys of Persia have been given to me. By God, I see the white castle of Mada'in (Ctesiphon)." In the third attempt, the remaining portion of the rock was broken to pieces. The Apostle then said, "Glory be to God, I have been given the keys of Yemen. By God, I can now see the gate of Sana'a."²

At the time when this prediction was made, no prophecy could be more remote from the way things fall. Meager diet and bleak weather then emaciated the Muslims and the army, advancing against the not too well-fortified city, was threatening to deal a death blow to its defenders.

SOME MORE MIRACLES

The companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) witnessed a number of miracles while digging the trench. Whenever a party felt any difficulty owing to the existence of any rock which they could not break or remove, the Apostle asked for some water and mixed a little of his saliva into it. Then he prayed as God willed him to pray; and directed to sprinkle the water on the rock which pulverized like a heap of sand.¹

Very often, so they say, a little food sufficed for a large number of persons or even the entire army of three thousand workers.

Jabir b. Abdullah said, "When we were digging at the trench a huge pile of rock appeared as an obstruction. The people went to the Apostle and told him that a piece of rock had obstructed their work. Saying, 'I shall go down', he stood up while he had a stone tied on his belly, for we had been working three days without tasting food. The Prophet then took the mattock and struck it, which became a mound of sand pouring down. I then

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, p. 194

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 217-18

left the Prophet and went to my house. I asked my wife if she had anything, for I had seen the Prophet very hungry. ‘Yes’, said she, ‘I have a little barley and an ewe.’ I killed the ewe and she ground the barley, and we put the meat in a pot for cooking. When the meat was being cooked and the flour had been kneaded, I went to the Apostle and told him secretly that I had a little food for him, so he might come over with one or two more persons. The Apostle asked me how much victuals I had and I told him I had enough for the guests. The Prophet replied, ‘It is too good and sufficient.’ Then he asked me to go back and tell my wife not to take off the pot nor bake the dough until he had arrived. The Apostle invited all the people, Ansar and Muhajirrin, who came with him. I went back to my wife and told her if she knew that the Apostle had invited all the people, Muhajirin and Ansars, and everybody present there was coming with him. She asked, ‘Did the Prophet ask you about the food available?’ I replied in the affirmative. Then the Apostle came and told the people to enter the house. He took pieces of the loaves and placing meat on them, distributed to the people turn after turn, and kept the oven and the pot covered with a cloth. With this, he was able to share loaves of bread and meat to all his companions until everyone was satisfied. Then he asked my wife and me to take the food and give it to others, for we were also without food for a few days.”¹

Another version of the incident related by Jabir says that he went to the Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and told him in a whisper that he had killed an ewe and had little barley which had been grounded and so if he might come with a few persons to share in the preparation. But the Apostle said aloud, “You who are working at the trench, Jabir has prepared a banquet.”

THE FIERY ORDER

¹ Bukhari, *Bab-ul-Khandaq*

The Muslims had hardly finished work on the trench when the Quraish arrived and encamped outside Medina. They had ten thousand well-equipped warriors with them. Ghatfan came with their confederate tribes and encamped with the Quraish. The Apostle assembled his three thousand men to face them, the trench intervening between the camps of the two armies. Bani Qurayda, the Jewish tribe of Medina, had made a treaty with the Apostle for the defense of the city. However, Huyayy b. Akhtab, the chief of Bani Nadir, deported earlier from the city and coaxed Bani Qurayda into breaking the pledge made earlier by them.

The Muslims were placed in a desperate position, where an air of insecurity and fear seized the city. The faint-hearted hypocrites now showed their true colors, even sowing seeds of discontent among the rank and file. The Prophet at once realized the dangerous plight of the Muslims in general, and that of the Ansar in particular, who had always had to bear the major brunt of war with the infidels. The Apostle, therefore, proposed that it might be worthwhile to make peace with Bani Ghaftan by giving them one-third of Medina's date harvest. The Apostle did not want the Ansar to be troubled any more for his sake. But S'ad b. Mu'adh and S'ad b. 'Ubada, the two chiefs of Aus and Khazraj, did not agree to the suggestion. They said, "O Messenger of God, when we and the Ghatfan were polytheists and idolaters, neither serving God nor knowing Him, they got none of our dates except as guests or by purchase. Shall we give them our property after God has honored us with Islam and your guidance? No, by Allah, we shall give them anything but the sword until God decides between us." "As you please," replied the Prophet giving up such an idea.¹

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, pp. 202-3

THE ACTUAL FIGHT

The army of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) pitched its tents behind the trench and watched day and night. Beyond the trench, the allied forces laid a siege of the city but the impasse continued for a few days without any actual fighting between the two armies. The enemy cavalry rode ahead and, on coming nearer, suddenly saw a wide ditch. The unexpected filled them with consternation.

“A novel device, a wily ruse” they exclaimed in amazement. How was the ditch to be crossed, they asked one another and decided to go around the trench to find where it was the narrowest. Some of them beat their horses so that they jumped over the moat and carried their rides into the territory of Medina. One of these was the well-known warrior, ‘Amr b. ‘Abdu Wudd, who was considered a match for a thousand horsemen. After crossing the ditch, he stopped and challenged anyone to fight him.

‘Ali immediately sprang forward and said to him, “‘Amr, you declared to God that if a man of Quraish offered you two alternatives you would accept one of them.” “Yes, I did”, replied ‘Amr. “Then” said Ali, “I invite you to Allah and His Apostle and to Islam.” ‘Amr replied, ‘It is of no use to me.” “Then I call you to face me”, rejoined ‘Ali. “Why”, said ‘Amr, “O son of my brother, by God, I do not want to kill you.” “But,” retorted ‘Ali, “I do want to kill you.” ‘Amr was flushed with anger. He dismounted his horse, hamstrung it and slapped its face, then he turned to ‘Ali. ‘Amr fought, jostled with ‘Ali, made blows and parried, but ultimately ‘Ali cut off ‘Amr’s head with a sweeping slash of his scimitar. Two of his comrades who had stormed the trench with him darted back on their horses.

ARDENT ZEAL OF MUSLIM WOMEN

‘Aisha, who was then in the citadel of Bani Haritha with other Muslim women, was young enough to screen herself from men. She says that S’ad Mu’adh passed that way. He was putting on a coat of mail so small that his hands were fully exposed. He was reciting some verses, when his mother told him hurry up lest he should be late. “Umm S’ad, by God, I wish that his coat of mail were longer.” The fear expressed by ‘Aisha ultimately proved to be well justified for S’ad was shot by an arrow on his arm and died of excessive bleeding¹ during the subsequent battle with Bani Qurayda.

DIVINE SUCCOR

The siege continued for a month or so. The Muslims were hungry and weary while the transgressors were fully provided with arms and provisions. The hypocrites showed their true mettle such that many of them asked permission from the Prophet to return to Medina on the pretext that they had come in a hurry leaving the doors of their houses unlocked. In reality however, they just simply wanted to withdraw from the battlefield.

The Apostle (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his companions endured the days in nervous strain, harassed by the enemy in front and worried by the menace of the Jews in the rear. Then, suddenly one day Nu’aym b. Mas’ud belonging to the Ghatfan came to the Apostle and told him that he had secretly embraced Islam, but his own people did not know of it. He also offered to do whatever he was ordered. The Prophet replied, “You are the only man there, so remain with them and try to help us, for war is but a strategy and a clever device.”

After taking the prophet’s permission, Nu’aym b. Mas’ud went off to Banu Qurayda. He talked to them in a way that they began

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, p. 207

to wonder whether they had taken a correct decision in abandoning the Muslims, their next-door neighbors, for the sake of the distant tribes like the Quraish and the Ghatfan. He further advised them that it would be wise of them to demand some notable members of the Quraish and Ghatfan chiefs as hostages before joining their fight, so that they got a fair deal from their allies. Bani Qurayda expressed their gratefulness to Nu'aym for his excellent advice.

Nu'aym then went to the leaders of the Quraish and after assuring them of his sincerity, told them that Bani Qurayda were unhappy on taking sides with them. They were thinking of demanding some of their nobles as hostages, by way of security, on the pretext that the promise made to them by the allies was not broken. He also said that Bani Qurayda had actually sent word to Muhammad (peace be upon him) that they would hand over to him a few chiefs of the two tribes to prove their sincerity to him, so that he might cut off their heads. Nu'aym told the same story to the Ghatfan people as well. The seeds of distrust thus sowed by Nu'aym between Bani Qurayda, on the one hand, and the Quraish and the Ghatfan, on the other, made each cautious as well as suspicious of the other party. Abu Sufyan decided upon a general attack, and then demanded hostages from the Quraish and Ghatfan before pulling together with them. The stratagem of Nu'aym b. Mas'ud proved a complete success. The Quraish and the Ghatfan were convinced that the news brought by Nu'aym was entirely correct, and they promptly turned down the demand of the Jews. Bani Qurayda, on their part, became dead sure that their allies were not sincere to them. The discouragement suffered by the allied forces smashed their unity and exhausted their patience.

Then, in a cold and cloudy night, a violent hurricane from the desert uprooted the tents of the nomads and overthrew their cooking pots. The severe weather, sent by God, disheartened the enemy. Calling his men, Abu Sufyan said to them, "O Quraish,

it is no longer a fit place to camp here. Our horses have died, Bani Qurayda have not kept faith with us and we have heard dreadful tidings of them. You can see the havoc caused by the gale; we have neither a cooking pot at its place, nor a lit fire, nor have a tent standing, nor yet a shelter to bank on. Get you gone, for I have decided to go.” Abu Sufyan then got up abruptly and going to his camel which was hobbled, mounted it and beat it, and he did not even free it from its hobble until it had stood up.

When the Ghatfan learnt that the Quraish had departed, they also vanished amidst the darkness of the desert.

Hudhayfa b. Al-Yaman, who had been sent by the Apostle to spy on the movements of the enemy, returned with the news of the enemy’s departure when the Prophet was offering prayers. He told the Apostle what he had seen.¹ No trace of the enemy was left by the break of the dawn when the Apostle and the Muslims left their camp, not to the trench, but to their houses in Medina where they laid down their arms.²

This was a miracle worked by the mercy of God, as the Qur’an says about it:

“O ye who believe! Remember Allah’s favor unto you when there came against you hosts, and we sent against them a great wind and hosts you could not see. And Allah is ever Seer of what you do” (Qur’an 33:9).

“And Allah repulsed the disbelievers in their wrath; they gained no good. Allah averted their back from the believers. Allah is Strong, Mighty” (Qur’an 33:25).

And then the billowy clouds that had covered the heavens disappeared without any rainstorm or thunderbolt, leaving the

¹ Muslim, Chap. Ghazwatul Ahzab

² Ibn Kathir, Vol. III pp. 214-21

sky of Medina as clear as ever. The Apostle said to his companions, "The Quraish shall not come at you after this year, but you would attack them after that."³

Seven Muslims laid down their lives in the battle of the Trenches while they killed four of the infidels.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 221

ACTION AGAINST BANI QURAYDA

Bani Qurayda's Breach of Faith

Not long after his arrival in Medina, the Prophet got a covenant made between the Ansar and Muhajirin to which the Jews were also made a party and were guaranteed protection of life and property as well as freedom of professing their faith. The covenant, which was reduced to writing, accepted certain rights of the Jews and also put them under certain obligations. Some of the important considerations of this covenant were as follows:

“Those among the Jews who sided with us shall be liable to equality and help. Neither shall they be wronged nor shall their enemies be given help. No polytheist of Medina shall afford protection to the property or life of any Quraishite, nor shall he intervene against a believer on their behalf. The Jews shall bear the expenses so long as the war lasts, like the believers. The Jews¹ shall be considered as one community along with the believers – they shall have the freedom of their religion and the believers shall be free to profess their faith. They shall have full freedom to deal with their allies and slaves and to settle their affairs.’

The compact also made both the parties liable to help one another in the event of war, subject to the limits of divine injunctions, responsible to promote mutual co-operation, goodwill and cordial relations between the confederates. One of its terms provided that if an enemy attacked Yathrib, both the Jews and the Muslims shall join hands in its defense.²

But, in spite of these clear undertakings, Bani Qurayda were convinced by Huyayy B. Akhatab al-Nadir to go back on their words in order to help the Quraish. As a matter of fact, when Huyayy B. Akhtab had come to Bani Qurayda for rallying them

¹ The covenant gives the names of various Jewish tribes of Medina like Bani ‘Auf, Abni Sa’ida, Bani Jusham, Bani Th’alaba who were made party to the covenant.

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. pp. 503-4

over to the allies against the Muslims, their chief Ka'b B. Asad had replied, "I have always found Muhammad (peace be upon him) truthful and trustworthy." However, Ka'b B. Asad broke his word and acquitted himself of every responsibility devolving upon him by the covenant.

When the Apostle heard of Banī Qurayda's betrayal, he delegated a few persons headed by Sa'd B. Mu'adh and Sa'd B. 'Ubadā, the two chiefs of Aus and Khazraj, to see if the report was correct. What they found out was that the situation was even worse than what had circulated around. Banu Qurayda spoke disparagingly of the Apostle and said: "Who is the Apostle of God? We have no pact or pledge with Muhammad (peace be upon him)."¹

Banī Qurayda then started making preparations for an armed conflict with the Muslims; they threatened to stab in the back and actually placed the Apostle and his followers between the hammer and the anvil.² The situation would not have been so hazardous had the Jews declared their intention, from the very beginning, to fall out with the Muslims. The Qur'an had depicted the plight of the Muslims picturesquely:

*"When they came upon you from above you and from below you?" (Qur'an
33:10)*

It was but natural that the Muslims got offended by the infidelity of the Jews, and how hard it had afflicted them can be judged from the prayer sent up fervently by Sa'd B. Mu'adh. The chief of Aus, he had been in partnership with these Jews for many years and was, thus, their ally and sympathizer. When he was shot by an arrow which severed the vein of his arm, and he lost the hope of surviving for long, he supplicated to God, saying, 'O Allah, do not

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. pp. 220-23

² Writing about the action of the Jews on this occasion, W. Montgomery Watt write in the *Cambridge History of Islam*: "The remaining large Jewish group in Medina, the clan of Qurayza, had been overtly correct in its behaviour during siege, but had almost certainly been in contact with the enemy, and would have attacked Muhammad in the rear had there been an opportunity." (Vol. I p. 49).

let me die until I have set my eyes on the destruction of Bani Qurayda.”

BANI QURAYDA ASSAILED

The Prophet as well as the Muslims set their arms aside after their return from the battle of the Trenches. An account of what happened thereafter, as related by the traditions, is that Gabriel came to the Prophet and asked, “O Apostle of God, have you put aside your arms?” When the Apostle replied that he had, Gabriel said, “but the angels have not put away their arms.” “Allah commands you”, continued Gabriel, “to march on Banu Qurayda, where I will also go there to flutter them.” Thereupon the Prophet got an announcement made that everyone listened and compelled them to perform with him their ‘Asr prayer at Bani Qurayda.¹

The Prophet and his people besieged the district inhabited by the Jewish clan of Bani Qurayda, whereupon the beleaguered Jews defied the siege for twenty-five days after which they gave in and offered to surrender. Allah cast terror into their hearts.²

REPENTANCE OF ABU LUBABA

In the meantime, the Jews requested the Apostle to send them Abu Lubaba of Bani ‘Amr ‘Auf (who were allies of the Aus) that they might consult him. The apostle accepted their request. When Abu Lubaba went to the Jews, all of them got up to receive him. Abu Lubaba was moved by the plight of the women and children who started bewailing and dissolving into tears in his presence. The Jews asked Abu Lubaba whether they should surrender to the judgement of the Apostle. “Yes,” replied Abu Lubaba, but he also pointed with his hand to his throat.

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 233-34. For detailed version see *Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Jihad was-Siyar*.

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 235

Abu Lubaba says that before he had left the place it occurred to him that he had not been faithful to the Apostle of God. He hastened back instead of presenting himself to the Prophet then tied himself to one of the pillars in the Prophet's mosque. He declared his intention not to leave the place until God had forgiven him. He also resolved neither to go back to Bani Qurayda nor to set his eyes again on the place where he had betrayed Allah and His Apostle.

The repentance of Abu Lubaba eroded his guilt, as evidenced by the following revelation that descended from God:

"And (there are) others who have acknowledged their faults. They mixed a righteous action with another that was bad. It may be that Allah relented towards them. Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful." (Qur'an 9:102)

Several persons rushed forward to set Abu Lubaba free but he refused, saying, "No! Not by God until the Apostle of Allah release me with his own hands." The Apostle removed the rope with which Abu Lubaba had tied himself when he came out to perform the morning prayer. Abu Lubaba remained bound to the pillar of date-palm trunk in the Prophet's mosque for about twenty days. At the time for prayers his wife used to set him free and he again bound himself after the prayer was over.¹

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 236-38

TRUTH IN ACTION

Bani Qurayda submitted to the Apostle's judgement but the people of Aus who had long been friendly with the Jews had a soft spot in their hearts for them. They said to the Apostle, "O Messenger of Allah, they are our allies against Khazraj and you very well know what they have done agreeing to place the decision in the hands of an arbitrator from amongst you." They agreed and the role was entrusted to their chief, S'ad B. Mu'adh.

When S'ad arrived, his clansmen begged him to be lenient to Bani Qurayda; for they insisted, the Apostle had made him an arbiter so that they get their demand. S'ad B. Mu'ad replied, "fate has brought this opportunity to S'ad; let him not be ashamed of ought in fulfilling the commandment of God." Then, S'ad gave his decision: "I decided that the men should be killed, the property divided, and the women and children taken as captives." The Prophet, on hearing the verdict of S'ad, remarked: "You have awarded them God's decision."¹

DECISION CONSISTENT WITH THE LAW OF MOSES

The decision disclosed by Sa'd B. Mu'ad was nothing more than what is laid by the Israelites' law of war. The fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy, containing the sacred law of the Jews on the subject in question runs like this:

"When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace, and open unto, then shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, but will, make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it; and when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword; but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof,

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 239-40. The words of the Prophet quoted in the Muslim are: "You have awarded them the God's decision" or the Prophet said, "The King's decision." (*Muslim, Kitab-ul-Jihad was-siyar*).

shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee.” (Dent, 20:10-14)

This was the practice followed by the Jews since the olden times. We read in the Book of Numbers that:

“And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males. And they slew the kings of Midi-an, besides the rest of them that were slain, namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midi-an; Balaam also son of Boer they slew with the sword. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midi-an captives, and their flocks, and all their good. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castle, with fire.”¹ This law had not only enjoyed the approval of Moses but was also enforced by him.

“And Moses, and Ele-azar the priest, and all the princes of congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. And Moses said unto them; Have ye saved all the women alive?”²

The judgement declared by S’ad B. Mu’adh, executed ere long, made sure that Medina henceforth play safe with the crafty and scheming Jews. The Muslims could now be confident that none would act as traitors.

Sallam B. Abul Huqayq was one of the Jews who had played a leading role in inciting the desert clans to make a united bid to subvert Islam. The Khazraj killed him at his house in Khaybar. Aus had already done away with Ka’b B. As’Ashraf who had done his utmost to provoke the Quraish against the Muslims and to slander the Apostle of God. Extermination of these two implacable enemies of Islam removed the source of danger ever willing to foment a new trouble for the burgeoning community in

¹ Num. 31:7-10

² Num. 31:13-15

Medina.¹

The settlement entered into by the Apostle with Bani Qurayda and other Jews of Medina was a defensive alliance along with an arrangement providing the basis for the establishment of a confederal administration of the city with a very large measure of autonomy by the units, which was consistent with the needs and wishes of the Jewish tribes of Arabia. But Bani Qurayda had broken their word without any justification whatsoever. Therefore, they needed an exemplary punishment if only to warn the other double-dealing or deceitful people against running with the hare and hunting with the hounds.

Commenting upon the imperative need of a deterrent punishment to the traitors on this occasion, R.V.C. Bodley writes in “The Messenger – The life of Muhammad”, thus:

“Muhammad stood alone in Arabia, a country equivalent in area to one-third of the United States, populated by about five million people. His own dominion was not much larger than Central Park; his means of enforcing his wishes, three thousand badly armed soldiers. Had he been weak, had he allowed treachery to go unpunished, Islam would never have survived. This massacre of the Hebrews was drastic but not original in religious history. From a Moslem point of view, it was justified, from now on, the Arab tribes, as well as the Jewish, though twice about defying this man who evidently intended to have his own way.”²

Another advantage gained by the destruction of this last but influential foxhole of treachery was that the bastion of hypocrisy built by ‘Abdallah B. Ubayy automatically became weak and impotent. The lukewarm among the Muslims, were shocked and dejected and were ultimately driven to despair. With the Jewish stalking-horse destroyed before their very eyes, they gave up the

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 273

² *Ibid.*, p. 217

habit of building dungeons in the air for Muslims. A Jewish scholar, Dr. Wellphenson has also reached this very conclusion that the punishment dealt out to Bani Qurayza helped to frighten and discourage the hypocrites, and had said:

“In so far as the hypocrites were concerned, their clamors declined after the expedition against Bani Qurayza; thereafter they said or did nothing against the decision of the Apostle and his companions, as it was expected earlier.”¹

BENEVOLENCE AND LARGE-HEARTEDNESS

The Apostle sent some on an expedition to Nadjid who captured Thumama B. Uthal, the chieftain of Banu Hanifa. When the cavaliers returned to Madina, they tied him to a stump in the Prophet's Mosque. God's Messenger came out of him and asked, “What do you expect, Thumama?” He replied, “if you kill me, Muhammad (peace be upon him)?” , you will kill one whose blood will be avenged; if you show me a favor, you will show it to one who is grateful; and if you want property, you will be given as much as you wish.” The Apostle left him and when he passed by him the next time, he asked him the same question. Thumama repeated his earlier reply and the Apostle left him again. When the prophet passed by him for the third time, he ordered Thumama to be set free.

Thumama went away to a grove of palm-dates and returned to the Prophet after taking a bath. He accepted Islam and said to the Apostle, “I swear to God, Muhammad (peace be upon him) that there was no face on earth more detested by me than yours, but now your face is the dearest of all to me. And, I swear to God that there was no religion more hateful to me than yours in the entire world, but now the dearest of all to me. What happened to me is that your cavalry seized me when I was going to perform ‘Umra.”

¹ *Al-Yahud fi Balad al-'Arab*, p. 155

The Apostle congratulated him and bade him for the ‘Umra.

When Thumama came to Mecca, someone asked him if he had turned a disbeliever. He replied, “No, by God, I swore that not a grain of corn will reach you from Al-Yamamah until God’s Messenger accords permission to it.”

Al-Yamamah was the chief market of food grains in Arabia from where the Meccans used to import their requirements. When Thumama went back to Al-Yamamah, he prevented the caravans from bringing wheat to Mecca. So the people of Mecca wrote to the Apostle requesting him to get the ban lifted. The kind-hearted Apostle asked Thumama to repeal the ban and allow the rationing and supply of food grains back to Mecca.¹

EXPEDITION OF B. AL-MUSTALIQ AND THE AFFAIR OF IFAK

After some time the Apostle led an expedition against Bani Lihyān and went up to the hills of Dhu Qarad in pursuit of some raiders, but there was no fighting. In Sha’ban, 6 A.H., the Apostle was informed that Bani al-Mustaliq were thronging for an attack on him. The Apostle went out with a group to face the enemy. A large party of the hypocrites, still skeptical and reticent, accompanied the Apostle with their leader ‘Abdallah B. Ubayy B. Salul. The Hypocrites had never before gone out with the Apostle in such large numbers in any earlier expedition.²

The failure of the Quraish in the battle of the Trenches despite having mustered all the warriors of their confederate clans for the destruction of Islam, had made the hypocrites bitter and sour, indeed burning with hostility in their souls. The Muslims were gaining victory after victory, the star of their fortune was on the

¹ *Zad-al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 377, *Sahih Muslim*, *Kitab-ul-Jihad* was Siyar

² *Ibn S’ad Kitab ul-Tabaqat al-Kabirah*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 45

rise, and this had sent the Quraish, the Jews and their hooks in distress. They knew that the Muslims could not be humbled in an open combat by their enemies and hence the only way to defeat them was by sowing dissension in their ranks and pitting them against one another. They also knew that the means by which they could be put to requisition for undermining the confidence of the Muslims in Islam and its Apostle as well as creating a rift between them were disparagement of the holy prophet and arousing pre-Islamic sentiments of tribal pride. With this view in mind, the hypocrites started a clandestine campaign of casting reflections upon the honor of the Prophet. An entirely new type of society had, however, been brought into existence at Medina, whose members loved and respected every other man bound by the common ideal. These pretenders had, therefore, arrived at the conclusion that nothing could sap the foundations of this ideological fraternity more effective than a slanderous campaign aimed at creating misgivings about the leader of that order and his family. Undoubtedly, this was a well-devised conspiracy of the hypocrites, which was vigorously pursued during the expedition of Bani al-Mustaliq, when, for the first time, as stated earlier, a large number of them accompanied the Apostle.

The Apostle met the enemy at a watering place of Bani al-Mustaliq, in the direction of Qudayd towards the shore, known as al-Muraysri,¹ where the battle brought Bani al-Mustaliq to defeat and exodus.

While the Prophet was still at this place, a hired servant of Bani Ghifar, belonging to the Muhajirin got into a row with another man coming from the tribe of Juhinah, which was an ally of al-Khazraj. The Juhini called out, "O ye Ansar!" and the hired servant shouted, "O ye Muhajirin." 'Abdallah B. Ubayy B. Salul at once flared up and said to his friends who happened to be present with him, "didn't they dare it? They set themselves against us in our own country and tried to outnumber us. By God, it is just the

¹ The expedition is therefore also called as the expedition of Murays'i. See *tabaqat Ibn S'ad*.

same as the ancient saying: Feed the dog and it will bite you. I swear by God that when we return to Medina those who are worthy and noble will drive out the unworthy wretches.” Then, admonishing his men, ‘Abdallah continued, “you have yourselves wrought it. You allowed them to settle in your country and shared your property with them. By God, had you held back and not been so generous, they would have certainly gone elsewhere.”

The Apostle came to know about the incident and he at once gave orders to break the camp and then set off, although he was not accustomed to travelling at an abominable hour. He wanted the people to get rid of the vain disputations and promptings of the devil. The Apostle continued to move all daylong, and brought the night till dawn and during the following day till the sun became annoying. He made a halt when the people had become so tired that they readily fell asleep as soon as they laid their posteriors against the ground.

‘Abdallah was the worthy son of the unworthy ‘Abdallah B. Ubayy. He rushed to Medina ahead of the troops and waited for his father’s arrival. When ‘Abdallah B. Ubayy came, his son brought his camel to its knees, thereby obstructing the passage of his father whom he ordered not to enter Medina until he had acknowledged that he was indeed an unworthy wretch while the Apostle was commendable and noble. In the meanwhile, the Apostle also came up. He said to ‘Abdallah, “nay, let us deal kindly with him while he is with us.”¹

The Apostle used to cast lots, whenever he intended to go on an expedition, to decide which among his wives should accompany him. In the expedition of Bani al-Mustaliq the lot had fallen on ‘Aisha and she had accordingly accompanied the Prophet. At one of the stopovers in their journey back to Medina, the Apostle spent a part of the night before he ordered to break the camp. ‘Aisha had gone to answer the call of nature, and when she came

¹ *Tabaqat Ibn S’ad*, Vol. II, p. 46

back she discovered that she had dropped her necklace. She went back to recover it, but by the time she returned the army had moved off. Then the camel drivers who had the charge of 'Aisha's transport saddled her litter thinking that she would be in it as usual. However, 'Aisha was small and very light, so none could notice if she was in the litter or not. When 'Aisha came back she found no trace of the army. She wrapped herself in her smock and laid down in the hope that as soon as they would discover the truth or the real situation, someone would come to fetch her.

Safwan B. al-Mu'attal al-Salam had earlier fallen behind the army for a purpose. He happened to pass by 'Aisha. He saw her. "Inna Lillah", he called out, "The Apostle's wife!" then he brought his camel near her and turned back a few paces. After 'Aisha had rode the dromedary, Safwan took hold of the camel's halter and went ahead quickly in search of the army. Safwan overtook the army when it had again rested. Nobody took any notice of the incident, for such mishaps were not unusual in the caravans trekking the vast emptiness of the Arabian wilderness. To wayfaring Arabs, it was just a familiar misfortune and their code of honor, even in the days of pagan past, never tolerated the disgrace of their daughters. The Arabs, both pagans as well as after embracing Islam, were chivalrous enough to lay down their lives defending the honor of their women rather than to support any disgrace.

A poet of pre-Islamic days expresses the Arab sentiment of chastity and virtuousness in a couplet which depicts a lovely picture of Arab womanhood.¹

¹ An illustration of the Arabs' conduct towards women is provided by the incident relating to the migration of Umm Salma. When she was not allowed to migrate to Medina with her husband, she used to go every morning and sit in the valley weeping till the night fall. So it continued until a year or so had passed when her clan took pity on her and allowed her to join her husband. She saddled her camel and set forth Medina. 'Uthman b. Talha met her in way and on coming to know her plight decided to escort her. He took hold of her camel's halter and went with her to Medina. Umm Salma says that she never met an Arab nobler than 'Uthman. When she had to halt, 'Uthman used to kneel her camel and then withdrew. After she had alighted, he unload the camel and tied it to a tree. This, 'Uthman did all the way to Medina. (Ibn Kathir, Vol. II, pp. 215-17) This was the conduct of 'Uthman when he had accepted Islam. Safwan b. al-Mu'attal al-Salami was a had the benefit of the Prophet's guidance.

“If my glance meets the looks of a neighbouring maiden, I cast my eyes low until her abode takes her in”.¹

The companions held the Apostle in the same esteem and reverence as one has for one's father while the wives of the Apostle all served as 'mother of the faithful' to every Muslim. In fact, never had any people loved anyone more dearly than how the companions treated the prophet. Safwan B. al-Mu'attal was, as they say, a man of sterling qualities---noble, true-souled and God-fearing who had the reputation of being least interested in women.

In short, nobody paid any attention to the incident and the matter would have been forgotten had not 'Abdallah B. Ubbay walked into the picture. On coming back to Medina, 'Abdallah B. Ubayy thought it proper for their plans to succeed to capitalize on the adversity. He had found out, as he would though, something that he could bank upon to slander the Apostle and his household and thus weaken muslims' sentiments of love and admiration for him and his family. His treacherous disposition was shrewd enough to realize that his shameless attack on the Apostle's honor would create sufficient misgivings to destroy the mutual trust among the Muslims as well. And true enough, a few injudicious Muslims who were accustomed to jumping into conclusions without verification, were thus convinced by the crafty conspirator.

“Aisha had no idea of the vilification against her. As it normally happens in such cases, she came to know of it very late, and when she did know, she was bewildered. Plunged into sorrow, her anguish brought her to tears and she kept on sobbing with overflowing eyes.

The scandal was even more distressing to the Apostle of God. When he found out who was at the bottom of this intrigue, he proceeded to the mosque and ascending the pulpit he said, “O ye

¹ *Diwan al-Hamasa*

believers, who would allow me to say something about the man, who I have come to know, has caused trouble to my family. What I know of my family is naught but good and what they say concerning a man, I have known only good about him. Whenever he enters my house, he enters with me.”

The people of Aus were filled with indignation at the grief of the Prophet. They said, “we are prepared to behead the man, whether he belongs to Aus or Khazraj, who has given tongue to this calumny.” ‘Abdallah B. Ubayy belonged to Khazraj, and hence his tribesmen took the remark as an affront to tribal honor. Feelings ran high, and the two tribes were about to grapple with one another, but the presence of the Apostle calmed them down and the matter ended there.

‘Aisha was convinced of her innocence. She was distressed, but was also confident and composed just like the one who knows that the truth ultimately prevails in the end. She knew in the abyss of her heart that God would ultimately protect her honor and bring shame to the lying slanderers but it had never crossed her mind that God would send down a revelation concerning her which would be read in the mosques during prayers ‘till the end of time. She had not waited for long when the verses attesting her innocence were sent down by God, hence:

“Lo! They who spread the slander are a gang among you. Deem is not a bad thing for you: nay, it is good for you. Unto every man of them (will be paid) that which he hath earned of the sin; and for him among them who had the greater share therein, his will be an awful doom.

“Why did not the believers, men and women, when ye heard it, think good their own folk, and say: it is a manifested untruth?” (Qur’an 24:11-12)

And thus ended the frightful menace which was forgotten completely by the Muslims of Medina who devoted themselves

once again to a great task from which rested not only their own success, but that of the salvation of the entire humanity as well.¹

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 289-302 and Bukhari

THE TRUCE OF HUDAYBIA

Vision of the Prophet

The Apostle had a vision that he had entered Mecca and circumambulated the sacred House of God. It was a true dream from on High, as it later came out, although the period, month or year of the pilgrimage had not been indicated in the vision.¹ The companions of the Prophet were overjoyed when the Prophet told them about it.

Everybody esteemed and revered Mecca including the holy sanctuary there. The opportunity of paying a visit to it had been denied to them for a long time but nobody ever ceased to think of the holy city. They had been longing to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca all those years and were looking forward to the day when their hearts' desire would be fulfilled. The Muhajirrin were especially consumed with such desire since Mecca had been their birthplace and they had lived and matured from there but it's just that they were forced to abandon it. As soon as the Apostle informed the companions of the vision, all of them started making preparations for the journey while their over-enthusiasm at the prospect or realizing the ambition of their life convinced them that they were going to call upon the house of God that very year. Almost all of them promptly agreed to accompany the Apostle with hardly anyone conceding to be left behind.

TRIP TO MECCA

It was the month of Dhul al-Q'adah, in the sixth year of Hijrah, when the Apostle set out for Mecca with the intention of performing 'Umra or the lesser pilgrimage. The Apostle had no intention of performing the Haj, however. Making a detour

¹ See the commentary on Surah Fath, Verse 27 by Ibn Kathir.

through gullies of the hills he came near Mecca and encamped at al-Hudaybia. He had with him fourteen hundred companions as pilgrims, along with the sacrificial animals so that everybody would know that he was going not for war but for paying visit to the Ka'bah.¹

The Apostle sent ahead a man from Khuza'a to find out the reaction of the Quraish. When the Apostle reached Usfan,² the informer came back to report to him that the tribesman of Ka'b B. Luayy had assembled a strong force of nomad warriors to check his advance to Mecca. The Prophet, however, continued to drive ahead but when he reached the place where the valley of Mecca slopes down, his dromedary called Qaswa knelt down and would not get up. The man around the Apostle started babbling, "Qaswa won't get up, Qaswa won't get up!" But the Apostle said, Qaswa has not refused for such is not her nature. The One who restrained the elephants³ is keeping her back. I swear by Him who holds my life that if they propose anything to me which reckons with the regard due to Allah and asked me to show kindness, I will certainly accede to their request." The Apostle then rebuked the camel which immediately sprang up on her legs, but changed her direction and started off towards Hudaybia. She came to a halt in an expanse at the end of which there was a ditch that had but little water. Certain persons complained to the Apostle that they were thirsty. He took out an arrow from his quiver and asked them to throw it in the ditch. Thereupon, water started gushing forth and everyone was satisfied with drinking.⁴

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 380

² A Village between Mecca and Medina

³ The reference is to the elephants Abraha had brought for attack on Mecca

⁴ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 381

LOVE PUT TO TRIAL

‘Uthman went to Mecca and delivered the message of the Apostle to Abu Sufyan and other leaders of the Quraish. After the Meccans had heard the message brought by ‘Uthman they said. “If you want to go round the holy sanctuary, you may do so.” ‘Uthman, however, replied, “I won’t do until the Apostle has gone round the Ka’ba” After his return from Mecca certain Muslims said to him, “Abu ‘Abdallah, you have been fortunate enough to fulfill your heart’s desire by going round the Ka’ba.” Don’t be unfair to me,’ replied ‘Uthman. “I declare by Him who holds my life that if I were detained there for a whole year and the Prophet were to remain in Hudaibia, I would not have gone round the Ka’ba until the Prophet had done so. Frankly speaking, the Quraish did invite me to circumambulate the House of God, but I declined.”¹

THE PLEDGE OF RIZWAN

The Apostle was informed that ‘Uthman had been killed. He summoned the people to vow to avenge ‘Uthman’s death. Everybody gathered round the Apostle impatiently. Standing under the shade of a tree, the Apostle took one by one from the fourteen hundred standing round him, and after everyone had obliged to the oath, he struck one of his hands on the other, saying. “This is the pledge on behalf of ‘Uthman.”² Thus was the pledge of Rizwan taken under an acacia tree, which found its way thru the Qur’an:

“Allah was well pleased with believers when they swore allegiance unto thee beneath the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down peace of reassurance on them, and hath rewarded them with a near victory.”
(Qur’an 48:18)

¹ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 382

² *Ibid*

PARLEYS, CONCILIATION AND ACCORD

The deadlock still lingered on when Budayl B. Warqa' of the tribe of Khuza'a suddenly appeared with a few of his clansmen to straighten out the impasse. He asked the Apostle, "What have you come for?"

"We have come to perform the 'Umra', replied the Apostle, "The Quraish are already wrecked by war. If they agree I will make peace with them for a specified period and they should give passage to my companions and me. If they want they may coalesce with the group that others have joined and this would give them a respite. But if nothing is acceptable to them except war, then by Him who holds my life, I would fight them until I lose my head or Allah makes His religion victorious."

Budayl B. Warqa communicated to the Quraish what he had heard from the messenger of God. Urwa B. Masud al-Thaqafi, who happened to be present on the occasion, advised the Quraish that they ought to accept the terms proposed by the Apostle for they were absolutely reasonable. He also suggested that he might himself see the Prophet to which the Quraish agreed. 'Urwa went to the Prophet to discuss the matter with him but he also kept his eyes open to closely monitor the muslims' behavior towards the Apostle. He saw that if the Apostle spat, his companions ran to get it on their hands and rubbed it on their faces. If he asked for anything, they vied for complying with his order; if he performed ablution, they struggled to get the water he had used and if he spoke, everybody listened with rapt attention. Nobody dared even to look straight into his eyes. When 'Urwa went back to the Quraish, he said, "I have been to the courts of the kings and have seen the splendor of the Caesar and the Chosroes and the Negus. But never have I seen any king being so revered as Muhammad (peace be upon him) by his companions."¹ He gave the details of

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 382

his talk with the Apostle and again advised the Quraish to accept the terms offered to them.

THE TREATY OF PEACE

In the meantime another man of Bani Kinana, Mikraz B. Hafs, arrived in Mecca. He confirmed what the earlier emissaries had told the Quraish and so they decided to send Suhayl B. 'Amr to negotiate the terms of the treaty. As soon as the Apostle saw him coming, he said, "that they have sent this man, it seems they want peace." The Apostle also asked to prepare the agreement.¹

EXEMPLARY MODERATION AND PRUDENCE

The Apostle summoned 'Ali and told him to write: "In the name of Allah, Rahman 'the beneficent', Rahim 'the Merciful.'" Suhayl protested, "I do not recognise Rahman, but write as he custom goes." The Prophet then directed 'Ali, "Write: In thy name, O Allah." Certain Muslim demurred, 'No We must write: In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.'" But the Prophet said again, "Let it be: In Thy name, O Allah."

Then the Apostle asked 'Ali to write: "This is what Muhammad (peace be upon him) the Messenger of God has decided.'" Suhayl again objected, "I swear by God, if we had witnessed that you were God's messenger we would not have turned you away from the House of God nor fought with you; you shall write: Muhammad B. 'Abdallah."

"I am God's Messenger even if you disbelieve me", replied the Prophet; but asked 'Ali to rub out what he had written earlier. "By God, I cannot do it", replied 'Ali.

The Apostle, however, asked 'Ali to point out the place to be

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 316; *Bukhari*

rubbed out. 'Ali pointed it out to the Apostle who expunged it.¹

TREATY OR TRIAL

The Apostle started dictating the clause; "The agreement is made that the Quraish shall obstruct the passage of Muslims to the House of God and shall allow them to perambulate it." Shuhayl again raised an objection; "I fear the Arabs would say that we have been pliant to you in making this agreement. You can perambulate Ka'ba next year." The Prophet agreed to include the clause in the agreement.

Suhayl now made bold to say, "If one of us goes over you, he shall be returned to us even if he professes your religion." The Muslims jumped up saying, "What! How can we return a man who seeks our shelter as a Muslim?"

The contention was still going on when Abu Jandal B. Shuhayl appeared in chains. He had escaped from Mecca and had come to the Apostle straggling in fetters by a rugged, rocky track between the passes.

Suhayl lost no time to assert, "Muhammad (peace be upon him), this is the first man I demand from you under the Treaty." The Apostle replied, "But the Treaty is still being written and has not become final." Suhayl was excited. He cried in a huff, "If it is so, then I am not prepared to make any agreement with you."

The Apostle said again, "Let him go for my sake."
But Suhayl refused. He said, "I will not allow him to go even for your sake."

¹ Muslim, *Kitab-ul-Jihad-was-Siyar*, Chap. *Sulh Hudaybia*

Now, the Apostle replied, "Then do as you please." Suhayl was still foaming at the mouth. He retorted, "I have nothing to do."

Grieved to hear it, Abu Jandal said plaintively, "I have come as a Muslim to you, and I am being returned again to the polytheists. Do you not see what they are doing to me?" Abu Jandal had been put to severe torture for the sake of his faith.¹

The Apostle returned Abu Jandal as demanded by his father.

The treaty concluded between the Muslim and the Quraish provided that both the parties would observe a ten-year truce so that men might live in peace and that no party would lift its hand against the other during the period. Another condition of the Treaty was that if anyone from the Quraish came over to the Apostle without obtaining the permission of his guardian he would returned to them, but if anyone of those with the Apostle escaped to the Quaryash, they would not be bound to return him. Yet another provision stipulated that anyone who wished to enter a bond and security with the Apostle, he would permitted to do so and, likewise, anybody could come to a similar agreement with the Quraish.²

FAITH PUT TO TRAIL

The terms of agreement and the obligation to return without performing 'Umra plunged the Muslims into the most profound depression. it seemed incredible to them how the Messenger of God had agreed to those seemingly ignominiously terms. So dismayed were they that 'Umar went as far as to speak his mind. He stepped up to Abu Bakr and asked him, "Had the Apostle not told us that we would repair to the house of God and go round it?" "Yes", replied Abu Bakr looking calmly at the angry face of his

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 383; *Bukhari, Bab as-Shurat fil-Jihad*

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp 317-18

friend, “but did he tell you that you would go to the House of God and perambulate it this very year?”¹

Having concluded the treaty, the Apostle sacrificed the animals and got his head shaved. The Muslims sat with a long face for they were feeling beaten and crushed at not being able to visit Mecca and circumambulate the Ka’bah, but when they saw the Prophet performing the rites, they rushed to follow him in sacrificing the animals and shaving their heads.²

IGNONIMOUS PEACE OR SIGNAL VICTORY

The Apostle then broke camp to returned to Madina. He was still in the way when God confirmed that the truce of al-Hudaybah was not set-back but a signal victory.

“Lo! We have given thee (O Muhammad) a signal victory,
 “That Allah may forgive thee of thy sin that which is past and that
 which is to come, and may perfect His favour unto thee, and may
 guided thee on a right path,
 “And that Allah may help thee with strong help.” (Qur’an 48:1-3)

‘Umar asked the Prophet, “Is it a victory, O Apostle of God?” The Apostle replied, “Yes”³

FAILURE SUCCESS

Not longer after the Apostle had arrived in Madina, Au Basir ‘Utba B. Usaid broke away from the Quraish and escaped to him. He was followed by two emissaries of the Quraish to bring him back. They reminded the Apostle of the undertaking given by him and he promptly handed over Abu Basir to them. However, on his way

¹ Bukhari, *Bab as-Shurut fil Jihad wal Masaleh*

² *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol.I, p. 383

³ Muslim, *Kitab-ul-Jihad*, Treaty of Hudaybia

aback to Mecca, Abu Basir got clear of his guards and fled to the sea coast. After on Abu Jandal and some seventy Muslims persecuted by the Meccans also made their escape themselves good escape and joined Abu Basir at the sea shore where they established themselves on the road taken by the Quraish for their commerce with Syria. The band if Abu Basir 'Utbah now sought out the caravans of the Quraish, robbed their property and spread fear and terror killing any Quraishite that came into his power. Once again the trade of Mecca was endangered. The things got so bad that the Quraish wrote to the Apostle, begging him by the ties of their kinship to him, to recall these highwaymen to Medina and undertook to demand no more of those who escaped to him in future.¹

THE TREATY TURNS TO VICTORY

The events that followed proved that the truce of Hudaibia was decisive step in gaining victory after victory for Islam. The traders of Mecca had gloated over their part, had been led accept the seemingly inglorious terms of the treaty simply because of their faith in the Apostle. Both the parties oversoon found Islam found Islam making rapid strides in the Arabian Peninsula. It opened the door to the occupation of Mecca and, before long, it became possible to send deputation of Mecca for inviting the Caesar and the Chosroes and the Negus to accept Islam. The revelation of God had come true.

"Though it is hateful unto you; but it may be happen that ye hate a thin which is good for you, and it may happen that ye love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knoweth, ye know not." (Qur'an 2:216)

One of the advantages issuing from the truce was that the Muslims were no longer reckoned as exiles and outlaws, but regarded as a community worthy of the attention of the Quraish with whom they had made a treaty as equals. The alliance conceded the rightful

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol.I, p. 384

place to the Muslims they deserved in the Arabian body politic. And, perhaps, even more important was the atmosphere of peace and tranquility. The unending war of attrition so long carried on by the Muslims for their existence, had been dissipating their vigour and strength which could now be availed of for taking the message of Islam to the unhostile or rather ambivalent tribes of the desert. The truce provided an opportunity to the Muslims to meet and indulge in conversation and discussion with the tribes thus far hostile and beauties and virtues of Islam. They now began to discover how people who ate their food, wore their dresses and spoke their language, and were born and brought up in Mecca like them, had, in a few years, been changed into new class of people disdaining the corruption of polytheism and idol worship, hating tribal pride, vengeance and lust for blood and rapine and had begun to take the path of virtue and justice. They could now clearly see that his change of heart had been brought about by the teachings of Islam and the guidance of the Apostle of God.

Thus, within a year of the truce, as many Arabs embraced the faith of the Prophet as had not entered Islam during the last fifteen years.

“There was never a victory in Islam,” says Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri,” greater than this. When the armistice came and war laid down its burdens, people began to meet in safety and converse together. And no intelligent man was apprised of Islam who did not enter it. Within two years of the truce as many as those, as had entered it before, embraced Islam, or even more.”¹

Ibn Hisham says, “al-Zuhri’s assertion is demonstrated by the fact that the Apostle went to Hudaybia with 1, 400 men according to jabir B. ‘Abdallah but two years later the Apostle marched with 10, 000 men for the conquest of Mecca.”²

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 322

² *Ibid.*

Those Muslims who had been left behind in Mecca for one reason or the other were harassed and persecuted by the Quraish, but now they succeeded, after the conclusion of the treaty, to convert a considerable number of youngmen to their faith until the Quraish began to consider them as a new menace. These youngmen joined the band of Abu Basir which proved itself to be a new sword-arm of Islam, even more dangerous to Quraish were forced to beg the Apostle to call these men back to Medina. To this the Apostle agreed, and thus ended the distress of these poor men. All this came to happen as a result of the treaty of Hdaybia.¹

The Attitude of peace and amicableness displayed by the Apostle on this occasion, which demonstrated his exemplary patience and moderation, did not fail to impress the tribes which joined their faith to Islam. They were led to hold a high opinion of Islam and to love and revere it, which by itself, created a wholesome atmosphere for its rapid expansion without any conscious effort on the part of the Prophet or the Muslims.

KHALID B. WALID AND ‘AMR B. AL-‘AS

The treaty of Hdaybia also won the hearts. Khalid B. Walid was the promising general of the Quraishite army who handled sword and lance with the same dexterity as he did the troops. Soon after the truce had been signed at Hdaybia he accepted Islam and was conferred the title of the ‘Sword of Allah’ by the Apostle. Khalid proved himself worthy of the title as the conqueror of Syria.

‘Amr B. al-As was another dashing commander who subsequently made a name as the conqueror of Egypt. He, too, accepted Islam along with Khalid B. Walid when both of them called Islam along with Khalid B. Walid when both of them called upon Apostle at Medina shortly after the treaty of Hdaybia.²

¹ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, pp. 388-89

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 277-78

LETTERS TO MONARCH

The peaceful conditions following the Treaty naturally gave a boost to the missionary activities which kept on advancing day-by-day. Islam grew like an avalanche and showed the signs of assuming vast proportions. The Apostle then sent several letters to the rulers outside Arabia and the tribal chiefs¹ within the country inviting them to accept Islam. The letters were not couched judiciously by the Apostle but he also took care to select the envoys of different kings keeping in view the station and dignity of the different potentates. The envoys were conversant with the languages spoken as well as with political conditions of the countries to which they were deputed.²

When the Apostle expressed the desire to send letters to the kings of the Arabs and non-Arabs, the companions advised him to affix his seal on the letters for the unsealed letters were not recognized by the kings. The Apostle accordingly got struck a silver seal on which was engraved: “Muhammad the Messenger of Allah.”³

Letters of the Prophet

Of the many letters sent by the Apostle, those written to Heraclius, the Emperor of Byzantine Empire, Chosreos II, the Emperor of

¹ The letter were sent, as Waqidi says, in the month of Zil Hijja, 6, A.H. which coincides with 627 A.D. one of these letters was sent to Chosroes Pervez, the Emperor of Iran, who was killed in March 628 A.D. the letter to Heraclius would have also been sent in 627 A.D. but he set out on a tour to Armenia during 628 A.D. Heraclius should have, thus, received the letter on his return from Armenia when he went forth to the pilgrimage of Palestine. (See Alfred J. Butler, *The Arab conquest of Egypt*, p. 140).

² According to Ibn S'ad (*Tabaqat*, Vol. II, p. 23) and Siyuti (*Al-Khasa'is al-Kubra*, Vol. II, p. 11), the Apostle's ambassador received the miraculous gift of language and were able to speak in the language of the country to which they were sent. While a miracle similar to that conferred of the disciples of Jesus on the Day of Pentecost cannot be ruled out, for, the Prophet of Islam worked many an astounding miracle mentioned by his earliest biographers, but it appears more reasonable to expect that the Prophet selected envoys who could speak those language. The envoys were sent only to four foreign countries – Byzantium, Egypt, Iran and Abyssinia which had very close trade relations with Arabia. The Arabs fitted out caravans to these lands and we also find the nationals of these countries visiting Arabia or even settled down there. It was, therefore, not all difficult for the these countries. The embassies to Arab chiefs should, however, have presented no difficulty since all of them spoke Arabic.

³ *Bukhari, Kitab ul Jihad and Shama'il Tirmidhi*

Iran, Negus, the king of Abyssinia and Muqauqis, the ruler of Egypt, are remarkably significant.

Dihya b. Khalifa al-Kalbi, who was assigned to take the letter to Heraclius, got it forwarded to the Emperor through the ruler of Busra. The Apostle wrote in this letter.¹

“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This letter is from Muhammad, the slave and Messenger of God, to Heraclius, the great King of Rome. Blessed are those who follow the guidance.

“After this, verily I call you to Islam. Embrace Islam that you may find peace, and God will give you a double reward. If you reject, then you shall rest the sin of your subjects and followers.² O people of the Book, come to that which is common between us and you. that we will serve none but Allah, nor associate aught with him, nor take others for lords besides God. But if you turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims.”³

The Letter sent to the Chosroes II read:

“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. From Muhammad, the Messenger of God, to Kisra, the great King of Persia.

“Peace be upon whom who follows the guidance, believes in Allah and His Apostle, bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that I am the Apostle of Allah for the entire humanity so that every man alive is warned of the awe of God. Embrace Islam that you may find peace; otherwise on you shall rest the sin of the Magis.”⁴

¹ The original letter of the Prophet to Heraclius was in Spain for long centuries and it has reappeared now (*Muhammad Hamidullah, Muhammad Rasulullah*, p. 211).

² The Arabic word used by the Prophet was *araisiyan* or *arisen* variously translated by latter biographers, which has been discussed later on in his chapter

³ *Bukhari*, Chap. How the Revelation to the Prophet Began

⁴ *Al-tabari*, Vol. III, p. 90

In the letter¹ addressed to Negus, the Prophet had written that:

“IN the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to Negus, the great King of Abyssinia.

“Peace be upon him who follows the guidance.

“After this, Glory be to Allah besides whom there is no God, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Peace, the Faithful, the Protector. I bear witness that Jesus, the son of Mary, is the Spirit of God, and His Word which He cast unto Mary, the Virgin, the good, the pure, so that she conceived Jesus. God created him from His Spirit and His breathing as He created Adam by His hand and His breathing. I call you to God, the unique, without any associate, and to His obedience and to follow me and to believe in that which came to me, for I am the Messenger of God. I invite you and your men to the Great Lord. I have accomplished my task and my admonitions, so receive my advice. Peace be upon him who follows the guidance.”²

The letter³ sent to Muqauqis, the Chief of the Copts of Egypt, said:

“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to Muqauqis, the Chief of the Copts.

“Peace be upon him who follows the guidance.

“After this, I call you to Islam that you may find peace, and God will give you a double reward. If you reject, then on you shall be the sin of you r countrymen. O people of the Book come that which is common between us and you; that we will serve none but Allah, nor associate aught with Him, nor take others for lords

¹ The original letter exist at Damascus (*Muhammad Hamidullah, Muhammad Rasulullah*, p. 216)

² *Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*, Vol. III, p. 15

³ The original letter of the Prophet to Muqauqis is exhibit in the Topkapi Museum at Istanbul (*Muhammad Hamidullah, Muhammad Rasulullah*, p. 216)

besides God. But if you turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslim.”¹

Who were these Kings?

We cannot appreciate the gravity and significance of the memorable step taken by the Apostle unless we also know who were Heraclius, Chosroes, Negus and Muqauqis, what were the extent of their realms, and their prestige and splendour and might in the world of the seventh century. Any one not well acquainted with the political history of the time might take them as local suzerains, for ever so many of them are found in every country.

But, one who is mindful of the political map of the world in the seventh century and the power and splendor of the ambitious monarchs who had divided the world among themselves, would arrive at but one conclusion. That only a man sent by God on a mission could dare summon the imperious autocrats to put their trust in his apostleship. Such a man should be devoid of the least doubt in the success of his sacred task, or of a speck of fear in his heart. He had to possess such a glowing conviction in the glory and majesty of God that the proudest sovereign was to him not with more than an illusory puppet going through the motions of regality. For all these reasons, it would be worthwhile to give a brief sketch of the monarchs to whom the Prophet had sent his epistle.

Heraclius (610 – 641). The Byzantine empire, then calling itself “New Rome”, had along with its Iranian counterpart, kept a tight hand over the civilized world for several hundred years. Its emperors ruled in direct succession to the Roman Emperors over vast and populous lands in Europe, Asia and Africa.² The empire was enormously rich while its phenomenally good armies and navies had compiled a successful military record.

¹ *Muwahib Ladunniyah*, Vol. III, pp. 247-48

² The extent of its vast boundaries have been given in chapter I under the subtitle “The Eastern Roman Empire.”

Coming from a Greek family, Heraclius was born in Cappadocia but was brought up in Carthage where his father was the Exarch of Africa. In his early years he never made any illusion to his fire of genius, avarice for power or qualities of leadership. When Phocas killed the tyrant Emperor Maurice, in 602 A.D., and usurped the throne, the Chosroes of Persia declared himself the avenger of his former benefactor. The Byzantine Empire absorbed heavy losses as the Iranians reduced Antioch, Damascus, and Jerusalem and took away the True Cross in triumph. Soon afterwards they entered Alexandria, and Egypt too was gone. It seemed to be the end of the great Roman Empire in the East.¹

It was then that the secret emissaries of the Senate prevailed upon the Exarch of Africa to send his son from Carthage to Constantinople. Heraclius was crowned in 610 A.D., when the Empire, afflicted by famine and pestilence, was incapable of resistance and hopeless of relief against the enemy laying a siege to the capital. Heraclius spent the first few years of his reign beseeching the clemency of Persians and suing out peace, but in 621 A.D. he was suddenly awakened from his sloth. This was the year in which the prediction of Roman Victory, something most “distant of its accomplishment”,² was made by the Qur’an. In a sudden, displaying the courage of a hero, Heraclius exchanged his purple for the simple garb of a penitent and warrior and decided to become the deliverer of Christendom and restorer of the greatness of the Eastern Empire. He began a great counter offensive and defeating the Persians of their own territory, brought his victorious arms to the capital of Iranian Empire. Amidst the triumph of his succeeding campaigns, Heraclius avenged the honor of Byzantium, crushed the arms as well as the glory of Iranian Empire until it seemed to be nearing its end. Heraclius returned to Constantinople in 625 A.D. and then, in 629, marched in triumph to Jerusalem for

¹ E. Gibbon, *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, London 1908, Vol. V, pp. 70-72 and Iran Ba ‘Ahd Sasanian.

² E. Gibbon, *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, London 1908, Vol. V, pp. 74. Also see the Chap. Romans in the Qur’an and the author’s article the ‘Prediction of the victory of Roman in the Qur’an.

restoring the True Cross to the holy sepulchre. The people went forth to meet the victor, with tears and thunderous applauses, spreading carpets and spraying aromatic herbs on his path.¹ The glorious event was celebrated with the tumult of public joy. While the emperor triumphed at Jerusalem, he was conveyed the letter of the Apostle of God inviting him to embrace Islam.² By that time, Heraclius seemed to have exhausted himself. He became the “slave of sloth, of pleasure, or of superstition, the careless and impotent spectator of the public calamities,”³ as he had been in the beginning, until the new movement of Islam exploded out of Arabia and took away the very provinces Heraclius had recaptured from the Persians. The boundaries of the Byzantine Empire again shrunk to the Asia Minor and the coastal regions of the Mediterranean Sea in Europe. The work of Heraclius was undone, but he was decidedly one of the most extraordinary and inconsistent Emperors who assumed the charge of the Byzantine Empire. Great were his exploits and adventurous campaigns and he ruled the greatest empire of the day. In the magnitude of his dominions, wealth and military prowess, he could be compared only with Chosroes II, the Emperor of Persia. Heraclius died at Constantinople in 641 A.D. and was buried there.

Chosroes II.

Known as Khusro Parvez to the Arabs, he was the fourth son of Hormouz and the grandson of Chosroes I, Anushirvan the Just. Murder of Hormouz in 590 A.D. was succeeded by enthronement of Chosroes II, but after suffering a defeat at the hands of a rebel chief, Bahram, he had to solicit the protection of Maurice, the Byzantine Emperor. The fugitive prince was helped by Maurice with a powerful army which restored his kingdom after two fierce battles on the banks of Zab and the confines of Mada’in. While the

¹ *Fath ul-Bari*, Vol.I, p. 21

² The Apostle’s letter was sent to the ruler of Busra for forwarding it to Heraclius but as the latter was pre-occupied with the affairs of the State on return from War and Constantinople was far away, the letter could not be sent to him earlier. Heraclius was also away from his capital for subduing a resurrection in Armenia. Thus the letter reached him in Jerusalem in 629 A.D.

³ E. Gibbon, *The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. V. p. 76

majesty of the Persian Emperor was revived, Phocas, who promoted himself to the vacant purple, killed his adopted father, Maurice. Chosroes II decided to avenge the death of Maurice and invaded the Byzantine dominions in 604 A.D. Chosroes II continued to extend his triumphant march to Constantinople, even after the death of Phocas, rolling in the dust all the Byzantine provinces, Syria, Egypt and Asia Minor, in the rapid tide of his success. By 616 A.D. Chosroes II had reached the summit of his victorious campaign for he seemed to announce the approaching dissolution of the Byzantine Empire. But his insolent demands at last animated the dormant valor of Heraclius who put the Iranians to rout and penetrated into the heart of Persia. Chosroes II, had to ultimately leave his country and seek refuge in some far off place and thus the battle between the two empires came to an end in 628 A.D.

Chosroes II was, according to the unanimous verdict of historians, the greatest Emperor of Iran. In the East, his writ ran up to the northwestern parts of India.¹ During his rule, the glory and magnificence of royal court had surpassed the limits of fancy. Iran was, during this period, more than a match to any country of the world in its ostentatious living, luxury of its nobles and the splendid workmanship of its artisans. Writing about the attainments of Chosroes II, the noted Arab historian Tabri says:

“Made of a sterner stuff, he was the most prudent far-sighted Emperor of Persia. Deeds of valor, exploits of victory, abundance of wealth, stroke of luck and favorable circumstances had so bunched up during his reign as never before. It was for these reasons that he came to be known as *Pervez* which meant victorious in Arabic.”²

In the arts of civilization and ever-new innovations of edibles and drink, Iran was without any parallel.³ In the manufacture of

¹ *Iran ba 'Ahd Sasanian*

² *Tarikh Tabri*, Vol. II (Egypt), p. 137

³ *Ibid.* p. 995

perfumes it had attained perfection. The people had developed a taste for savory preparation, luscious liquors and the finest perfumes. Love of music had grown into craze, which had stipulated its development in the reign of Chosroes II. He was so fond of amassing wealth and artifacts that when his treasures were transferred from an old building to a new one at Ctesiphon in 607-8 A.D., it consisted of 468 million Mithqals of Gold valued at 375 million gold sovereigns. In the thirteenth year of his reign, Chosroes II had 830 million Mithqals of gold in his exchequer. The reign of Chosroes II lasted up to 37 years, after which his son Sherveh took over.

Muqauqis:

He was the Prefect as well as Patriarch of Alexandria acting as the Governor of Egypt on behalf of the Byzantine Emperor. The Arab historians normally mentioned him by his title 'Muqauqis' but they hotly dispute his personal identity. Abu Salih who wrote in the sixth century after Hijrah (12 century A.D.) gives his name as Juraid B. Mina al Muqauqis (which is corruption of George, son of Mina). Ibn Khaldun says that the then Muqauqis was a Copt while al-Maqrizi asserts that he was a Roman. When the Persians conquered Egypt in 616 A.D., the Byzantine Prefect and patriarch was John the Almoner who fled from Egypt to Cyprus and died there. George was appointed in his place as the Archbishop of Merkite church who remained in office from 621 A.D. till his death in 630 A.D. Known to the Arab historians as Juraij, they give the year of his appointment as 621 A.D. Alfred j. Butler is of the opinion that practically seized all the Arab historians about a person by the title of Muqauqis, appointed by the Byzantine Emperor Herculius after the recovery of Egypt from the Persians, who was both its Patriarch and Governor. They have, therefore, identified George as Muqauqis. But he also says that Muqauqis was only a title of the Patriarch since it was applied to the governor in the early Coptic manuscripts.¹ It is also possible that some Coptic Patriarch might have assumed the ecclesiastical and political

¹ A.J. Butler: *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, Appendix-C, pp. 508-26.

powers after the conquest of Egypt by the Persians. However, as the treaty of peace between the Romans and the Persians was executed in the year 628 A.D., the letter of the Prophet was more probably received by the Patriarch of Egypt when he was more or less independent. This is why, it appears, that the Apostle addressed him as the chief of the Copts.

Egypt was the most fertile dominion of the Byzantine Empire, far exceeding other provinces in population as well as in resources. It was also the granary of the Byzantine capital. When 'Amr B. al-'as entered Egypt at the head of the conquering Arab force, fourteen years after the Apostle had sent his letter to Muqauqis, he wrote to Caliph 'Umar B. al-Khattab about that land: "The country is exceedingly fertile and green. Its length covers a journey of one month and its breadth is of about ten days."¹ A census of Egypt taken by 'Amr B. al-As in 20 A.H./640 A.D. to find out the number of persons on whom jizya could be levied, showed that the population exceeded six million², one hundred thousand of which being Romans. 'Amr B. Al- As also wrote to the Caliph: "I have taken a city of which I can but say that it contains 4,000 palaces, 4,000 baths, 40, 000 Jews and 400 theatres for the entertainment of the nobles."³

Negus: Ethiopia is an ancient country in the eastern part of Africa lying along the coast of the Red Sea which came to be known as Abyssinia since the distant past. Its boundaries, as they existed in the seventh century, are not easy to define now.

The kingdom of Abyssinia was also one of the oldest in the world. The Jewish sources denote that the queen Sheba belonged to Abyssinia and her progeny by Solomon ever ruled the country. The Jews started migrating to the country from the sixth century

¹ *Al-Najum al-Zahira by Ibn Tahgri Bardi*, Vol. I, p. 32.

² See art. Egypt in Muhammad Farid Wajadi's *Da'iratul M'arif al-Qarn al-'Ashrin*. The Author, however, is doubtful about the population mentioned in view of the present population of Egypt and its growth rate for it is not more than forty millions at present.

³ *Husn-ul-Muhadra by Siyuti*.

B.C. after the destruction of Solomon's Temple but Christianity became the dominant faith of the people by the fourth century. When the Jewish monarch of Yemen persecuted the Christians of his land, Emperor Justin I wrote to the Negus of Abyssinia to help the Christians.¹ Negus of Abyssinia is said to have complied with by sending an army which captured Yemen in 525 A.D. and retained the hold of Abyssinia over it for about fifty years. Abraha was the viceroy of Abyssinian King in Yemen who led an army to destroy the House of God in Mecca whence came off the memorable event of 'Am al-fil or the year of the elephant.

The capital of Abyssinia was at Axum. Being a sovereign state, it was neither dependent nor a tributary to any alien power. Of course, as a Christian country, it had friendly relations with Byzantium which was then regarded as the protector of Christendom. The Byzantine Emperor respected the independence of Abyssinia for Justinian had sent his Ambassador by the name of Julian, to the court of Axum.²

De lacy O'Leary writes in the "Arabia before Muhammad" that "from 522 to the rise of Islam, the Abyssinians controlled the southern end of the Red Sea including trade with Africa, perhaps that with India as well."³

The official title of the King of Abyssinia was Nagusa Nagasht or King of Kings of Ethiopia.⁴ But, the name of the King to whom the Apostle sent his letter inviting him to embrace Islam has been variously mentioned in different sources. However, we have before us two kings of Abyssinia. One of these is the king during whose reign the Muslim migrated from Mecca to Abyssinia under the leadership Ja'afar B. Abi Talib, in the fifth year of the apostleship of Muhammad (Peace be upon him). But it is highly improbable that the Apostle wrote any letter to Negus at that time. The

¹ De Lacy O'Leary, *Arabia before Muhammad*, London, 1927, p. 119.

² A.H.M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, *A history of Abyssinia*, Oxford, 1935, p. 32)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 120

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63

circumstances prevailing with the Prophet at Mecca then were unfavorable for addressing such a letter to any ruler. And in any case, it was neither an appropriate time for inviting any noble or king from a foreign land to accept Islam nor did he send any such letter, according to the Traditions, to any foreign dignitary. All that the Traditions suggest is that the Apostle had requested the then Negus to afford protection to the Muslims in his country for they were being severely persecuted by the Quraish. Similarly, the writings of Ibn Hisham and others imply that the Negus had admitted the truth of divine revelation and accepted that Jesus was a Prophet and word of God cast by Him unto Mary, the mother of Jesus.

In so far as the Negus to whom the Apostle had sent his letter is concerned, he was, according to Ibn Kathir, the King who succeeded the Negus who had been given asylum to Ja'afar B. Abi TaliB. Ibn Kathir maintains that the letter inviting him to accept Islam was written to the Negus before the conquest of Mecca along with other monarchs. 'Ibn Kathir's view appears to be preferable for this second Negus accepted Islam, and of whose death the Prophet informed the Muslims and prayed for his salvation. Waqidi and some other biographers of the Prophet have stated that the Prophet had prayed for the Negus after a return from Tabuk in Rajab 09, A.H.¹ The consequential circumstances of the event suggest that Waqidi is correct in holding this view and in its dating.

REACTION OF THE MONARCHS

Heraclius, Negus and Muqauqis received the letter from the Apostle with all due respect that each gave a courteous reply. Negus and Muqauqis showed the highest regard to the envoys from where the latter even sent some presents to the Apostle. These included two slave-girls, one of whom was Maria who gave

¹ *Sahih Muslim*, Vol. V. p. 166

birth to the Apostle's son Ibrahim.

Chosroes II was indignant, he tore the letter into pieces, saying, "My slave dares to write me thus!" When his reply was conveyed to the Prophet, he said, "even so shall God shatter his kingdom to pieces."¹

Chosroes II wrote to Badhan, who was his governor in Yemen, to get the Apostle sent to him in Ctesiphon. Badhan deputed Babwayh to tell the Apostle what Chosroes II had written to him and that he had come to take him to the King. But when Babwayh came to Medina, the Apostle told him, "God has given Sherveh power over his father and he has killed Chosroes II." The prophecy of the Apostle came true exactly in the way foretold by him. Chosroes' son Qubaz had by then deposed his father and seized the throne under the title of Sherveh. Chosroes II was murdered in March 628 A.D. and with him ended the glory of four hundred years old house of Sasanids. Sherveh enjoyed only six months of the fruits of his crime, and in the space of four years the regal title was transferred to ten sovereigns, in quick succession, until, the exhausted monarchy was assumed by Yazdagird III. He was the last Persian Emperor for he was soon to flee for his life before the advancing might of the Muslims. And thus was realized the Apostle's prophecy within eight years of his pronouncement.² The Apostle had also said: "No more Chosroes after Chosroes dies."³ This portion of the prediction also came to pass with the fall of Yazdagird III.

In a few years the whole of Iran lay at the feet of the Muslims. The bulk of the population adopted Islam and there were born in Iran men with such lambent flame of intellect that proved true, word by word, what the Apostle had once remarked: "If knowledge were to be found in pleiads, some of the sons of Persia would

¹ *Tabari*, Vol. III, pp. 90-91

² See Chapt. X, the last days of Sasanid Empire in the Iran ba 'Ahd Sasainan

³ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, p. 513 and Muslim.

attain it.”¹

HERACLUIUS AND ABU SUFYAN

Heraclius decided to satisfy himself about the contents of the Apostle’s letter. He ordered to search for a man from Arabia who could tell him about the Prophet. Abu Sufyan happened to be there on a business trip and so he was summoned before him. The question raised by Heraclius on this occasion showed that he had a deep insight into the scriptures and the teachings of the prophet of yore and he knew how and when God sends them and the way they are usually treated by their people. Abu Sufyan, too, acted like a true Arab for he considered it below his dignity to tell the Emperor anything but truth.

The conversation between Heraclius and Abu Sufyan is significant enough to be quoted here in extenso or at full length.

Heraclius: Tell me about his lineage.

Abu Sufyan: He comes of the best lineage.

Heraclius: Did anybody before him make the claim he does?

Abu Sufyan: No.

Heraclius: Had there been any king in his family?

Abu Sufyan: No.

Heraclius: Who have followed him? Are they the poor and the weak or the nobles?

Abu Sufyan: They are all poor and weak.

Heraclius: Are his followers increasing or deserting him?

Abu Sufyan: Their numbers are growing.

Heraclius: Do those who enter his religion despise and leave him?

Abu Sufyan: No.

Heraclius: Did you find him telling lies before he made the claim?

Abu Sufyan: No.

Heraclius: Did he ever break the word given by him?

Abu Sufyan: Not as yet, but we will see what he does in the future.

¹ Musnad Imam Ahmad, Vol. II, p. 399

Heraclius: Did you ever fight against him?

Abu Sufyan: Yes.

Heraclius: What was the result?

Abu Sufyan: The fortunes have varied, sometimes in our favor, sometimes in his.

Heraclius: What is it that he teaches?

Abu Sufyan: He asks to worship One God, and not associate ought with Him. To offer prayers, be virtuous to speak the truth, and be kind to the kinsmen.

Heraclius then asked the interpreter to tell Abu Sufyan: "I asked you about his lineage and you replied that it was the noblest among you. Prophets always come from the best lineage, I asked you if any man in his family had made a similar claim and your reply was 'No.' If anybody had made a claim to apostleship in his family, I would have thought that he was imitating him. Then I asked if there had been a king in his family, and you said 'No.' Had it been so, I would have surmised that he was trying to recover his lost kingdom. And I inquired if you knew him to be untruthful before making the claim, and you said 'No.' I know that it is not possible for a man to be truthful to the people but to mince the truth in regard to God. Then I asked you if his followers were drawn from the people of rank and distinction or they were the poor and the weak, and you replied that they were humble and meek. Prophets are always followed by the humble and poor in the beginning. And I asked if his followers were increasing and you said that they were gaining in numbers. Faith is always like that for it goes on increasing until it is triumphant. Then I asked if anybody had turned away from him and rejected his faith and your reply was 'No'. The faith once settled in the heart never leaves it. And then I asked if he ever broke his word and you said 'No.' Prophets never break their promises. Then I asked about his teachings and you told me that he asked you to worship One God, not to associate ought with Him; bade you to turn away from the idols and to speak the truth; and to be virtuous and to glorify the Lord. Now, if you have told me the truth about him he will conquer the ground that is beneath my feet. I knew that a prophet was about to

be born but I had never thought he would come from Arabia. If it had been possible I would have called upon him, and if I had been with him, I would have washed his feet.”

Heraclius summoned his chiefs and courtiers and got the doors of his chamber closed upon them. Then, turning he said, “Ye Chiefs of Rome! If you desire safety and guidance so that your kingdom shall be firmly established, then you follow the Arabian Prophet.” Whereupon they all started off but found the doors closed. When Heraclius saw them getting sore, he was despaired of their conversion, so he ordered to bring them back. He said, “What I had said before was to test your constancy and faith and I am now satisfied of your firmness and devotion.” The courtiers lowered their heads and were pleased to hear him speaking thus.

Heraclius lost the golden opportunity as he preferred his kingdom over the eternal truth. As a consequence, he lost even his kingdom after a few years during the time of Caliph ‘Umar.

Who were the Ariseen? – Araisiyan or ariseen is the word used by the Apostle in his letter to Heraclius. No other letter written to any other Arab and non-Arab king and potentate contains the word whose significance is disputed by the scholars of Traditions and lexicographers. According to one version it is the plural of Arisi which means the servants and the peasants.¹

Ibn Manzoor makes it out as a synonym for cultivators in the Lisan-ul-Arab and cites Th’alab as the authority for holding this view. He also quotes Ibn al-‘Arabi in his support while at the same time cites a quotation from Abu ‘Ubayda to show that the word also means the chief or the elder who is obeyed or whose orders are carried out.²

Now the question arises that if ariseen means peasants, it should

¹ See Nawawi’s Commentary on Muslim and Majm’a Bahar-ul Anwar by Muhammad Tahir Patni.

² Lisan-ul-Arab „See “Ars”.

have been employed to denote the subjects of Chosroes rather than the population of Byzantine Empire. The class of cultivators was by far more numerous under the Persian Empire and formed the chief source of its revenues. Ibn Mazoor has cited Azhari who says, “the people of Iraq who followed the religion of Chosroes were peasants and countrymen. The Romans were artisans and craftsmen and, therefore, they had nicknamed the Magis as Ariseen which meant that they were peasants. Arabs also used to call the Persians as fallaheen or the peasants.”¹

Ariseen has also been interpreted to denote Arians or the follower of Arius (280-336) who was the founder of a well-known Christian sect. The doctrine of Arius which hovered for a long time between acceptance and rejection as the official creed of the Byzantine Empire, upheld the Unity of God and denied the co-substantiality of the Son with the father. In other words Arianism maintained a complete distinction between the Creator and the creature, emphasizing the inferiority of the latter. In short, Arius held that the characteristics of the One and Only God are solitude and eternity and He puts forth nothing on the earth from His own substance. God brought into being an independent substance as the instrument by which all things were created. This being is termed, according to Arius, as Wisdom, Son, Image, Word, etc. in the scripture. The Son is not truly God, but is only the so-called Word and Wisdom. Like all rational beings, the Son is endowed with free will. He is not absolute but only relative, he is knowledge of the father.²

James Mckinon writes in his book ‘From Christ to Constantine’:

“Arius insisted that God alone is primeval, eternal and infinite; None is co-substantial with Him. He it is who brought the Son into existence and, therefore, the Son is not eternal. God was not father always; a time was there when the Son did not exist at all.

¹ *Lisan-ul-Arab*, See “Ars”.

² *Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics*, Vol. I, Art. ‘Arianism’ p. 777

The Son has an independent substance not shared by God for the Son is susceptible to change and contingencies. He cannot, therefore, be called God although he has perfection in his being. At any rate, he is a perfect being.”¹

The church of Alexandria had, by the fourth century adopted the view that the Father and Son were identical in nature, and that the Son was equal to, independent of, and contemporaneous with the father. Arius, the presbyter of the district of Baucalis, disputed this view and was condemned by a local synod which met at Alexandria in 321 A.D. Arius left Alexandria but the controversy between him and Bishop Alexander continued to be fought out only among the longshoremen. After trying hard to stay out of the verbal tussle, and urging the bishops to stop discussing it, Constantine realized that it required to be settled, but he did not succeed in his efforts. He summoned in 325 A.D., the first council of the whole of church, a council called ecumenical, at Nicaea, across the strait from Constantinople which was attended by 2030 bishops. Constantine was inclined to the divinity of Christ, as God the Son, and he gave his decision in its favor although a large majority of the Bishops preferred the doctrine of Arius. Only 326 bishops are reported to have cast their votes in favor of the view held by the King. Arius was banished to Illyricum, his writings were burnt and their possession was declared a crime, but the decree of Nicaea did not dispose of Arianism as the official creed of the realm although Arius died suddenly.²

In his History of conflict between Religion and Science, John William Draper says that in the fourth century alone there were thirteen councils averse to Arius, fifteen in his favor, and seventeen for the semi-Arians – forty five all in all.³

Formulation of One God in three person was, as a matter of fact, not solidly established in Christian life and in its profession of faith

¹ James Mackinon, from to Constantine, London, 1936, (Rendered from Urdu Translation).

² Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics, art. Arianism.

³ J.W. Draper, History of Conflict between Religion and Science, London (1910), p. 205.

prior to the end of the fourth century. The mystery of Trinitarianism was truly unraveled by the second half of the nineteenth century when Biblical theologians came around to acknowledge that when “one does speak of an unqualified Trinitarianism, one has moved from the period of Christian origins to, say, the last quadrant of the fourth century. It was only then that what might be called the definitive Trinitarian dogma: “One God in three persons,” became thoroughly assimilated into Christian life and thought.”¹

The Nicene dogma of Trinity violated the plain and simple teachings of Christ. Both competed, for a long time, to capture and win the minds of the people. A large number of Christians, especially in the eastern parts of the Byzantine Empire, continued to deem the Arian doctrine as the trustworthy dogma of faith. Until Theodosius the great (346-395) summoned yet another council of the bishops at Constantinople which finally set its seal on the divinity of Christ or unity in the Trinity of Godhead. Arianism was thereafter made a capital offense and suppressed ruthlessly. Arians went underground but traces of Arianism remained in the Christendom for a couple of centuries after the Council of Nicaea.

The word ‘Arisiyyin’ used in the Apostle’s letter to Heraclius can, therefore, be reasonably deemed to stand for Arians since Heraclius was himself faithful to the dogma of Arius which approached nearest to the Unity of God among the Christians. Strangely enough, some of the learned scholars of the earliest times have also favored this interpretation of the word in question, for example, Imam Tahawi (d. 321 A.H. writes in *Mushkil al-Athar*:

“Some of the knowledgeable scholars say that a sect among the courtiers of Heraclius, known as Ariseen, believed in monotheism and the created nature of Christ. They did not accept what the

¹ The New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967) art. “The Holy Trinity”, Vol. 14, p. 295.

Christians say about the divinity of Christ. They relied upon the Gospels and acted on its commandments, but the Christians disputed their faith. If that be so, the sect could be called Araisian or Ariseen, as known to the scholars of Traditions.”¹

Nuwawi (d. 676 A.H.) the commentator of the Sahi Muslim, has also expressed a similar opinion in this regard. He says: “Others say that they were Jews and Christians who followed ‘Abdallah B. Aris”.²

LETTERS TO THE ARAB POTENTATES

The Prophet also sent letters to Mundhir B. Sawa, ruler of Bahrain,³ Jayfar B. al-Julanda, and ‘Abd B. al-Julanda⁴ Azdi, rulers of ‘Oman; Haudha B. ‘Ali, the ruler of al-yamama⁵ and harith B. Shammar al-Ghassan. Mundhir B. Sawa and the two sons of al-Julanda, Jayfar and ‘Abd embraced Islam. Haudha B. ‘Ali wrote back to say that he would accept Islam provided he was allowed to share the dominion with Muslims. The Apostle turned down his request and he died soon thereafter.

¹ *Mushkit-wal-Athar*, Vol. p. 399

² *Nawawi, Sharah Muslim*, Vol. II, p. 98.

³ Bahrain forms part of Najd and is now known as al-Ahsa. The party sent under Abu ‘Ubayda to raid the coast was despatched to this region where it found a whale from the sea. The traditions refer to this region as al-Bahrain. The name is now applied to another region, a Sheikdom on the coast of Persian Gulf. The tribes inhabiting the region belonged to Bani ‘Abd al-Qays, Bakr b. Wall and Bani Tamim. When the letter was written the ruler of the area was Mundhir b. Sawa, the Chief of Bani Tamim.

⁴ Ai-Julanda was not the name of any person but a title meaning Chief of the religious leader in the dialect of ‘Oman, Jayfar, being the eldest brother, was then the Chief of ‘Oman.

⁵ Haudha b. Ali al-Hanafi was the King of Yamama, who professed Christianity. Salit b. ‘Amr was commissioned to deliver the Prophet’s letter to him. Yamama was then vast region between Bahrain, to the east, and Hijaz, to the west. Banu Hanifa were settled in this region. Musaylima belonged to this tribe, who was nickname Kazzab or the liar after he made a claim to apostleship.

THE EXPIDITION TO KHAYBAR

The Divine Reward

Allah had promised a great reward to all those who had, at Hudaibia, sworn allegiance to the Apostle which was known as Bey'at Rizwan or the oath of Paradise. Having submitted to the will of God and His Apostle in that hour of crisis, Allah foretold them of the coming victory as well as the booty they were to win shortly.

“Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance unto thee beneath the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down peace of reassurance on them, and hath rewarded them with a near victory. And much booty that they will capture. Allah is ever Mighty, Wise.” (Qur'an 48:18-19)

The Conquest of Khaybar was to serve as a prelude to the subsequent victories that followed in its path. Khaybar was a Jewish colony¹ comprising several citadels, some of which were built on the tops of hills and were virtually impregnable. It was, thus, the last but formidable Jewish stronghold in Arabia. Anxious to punish the Muslims for what had happened on their brothers in Medina, the Jews of Khaybar were willing to spend their wealth for stirring up the neighboring Arab tribes to wage war against the Prophet. At the time when the expedition to Khaybar was undertaken, the Jews of the place were in league with the tribe of Ghatfan with whom they were hatching up a plot against the Muslims.² The Prophet had thus a reason to act against the Jews of

¹ The forts of Na'im, Qamus and Ash-Shiqq were some of the famous forts of Khaybar. Yaqubi says that Khaybar then had 25, 000 able-bodied warriors. (Vol. 2, p. 56, cited from *Mujib Ullah Nadwi, Sahabah was Tabi'yin, Azamgarh*).

² With the Jews straining every nerve to bring about the destruction of Muslims, as Montgomery Watt says in his book, *Muhammad – Prophet and Statesman* (p. 189), the action against Khaybar could not have been postponed any longer. Montgomery writes: The Jews of Khaybar, especially the leaders of the clan of an-Nadir exiled from Madina, were still incensed at

Khaybar. He decided that the time had come to get rid of their intrigues once and for all so that he might be able to divert his attention to other pressing matters. Khaybar was situated at a distance of 112-Km northeast of Medina.

THE APOSTLE LEADS THE ARMY

After his return from Hdaybia, the Apostle stayed in Medina during Dhul-Hijja and a part of the month of Muharram. Thereafter he marched off Khaybar.

One of the companions of the Prophet by the name of ‘Amr B. al-Akhw’a, accompanied the Apostle on this expedition. He recited the verses given here while he rode with the army.

“We’d have not been guided, but for Allah, nor given alms, nor chanted Gloria, We are the people, when attacked or treated unjustly, we resist.

Send down Sakinah upon us, Against the enemy make us firm.¹

The combatants who marched against Khaybar numbered 1,400 including 200 cavalry, and all those who had lagged behind on the occasion of Hdaybia were refused permission to on this expedition. Twenty women also went along with the force so as to look after the sick and the wounded as well as to prepare food for the men.

The Apostle halted at Raj’I, a wadi between Khaybar and the Ghatfan so as to cut the communications between the two allies. The Jews had other confederate tribes as well but the Prophet’s stoppage at Raj’i forced all of them to remain in their home instead of trying to reinforce the Jews. The road to Khaybar was thus left open to the Apostle.

Muhammad. They made lavish, though no doubt judicious, use of their wealth to induce the neighbouring ward reason for attacking Khaybar.

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, pp. 344-45, Muslim, Chap. *Gazwah Khaybar*

The Apostle ordered to procure food for the army but nothing except parched corn was available.¹ When the Apostle approached Khaybar, he raised his hand to invoke and pray to God for the conquest of the colony and sought the Lord's refuge from the evil of its people. The Apostle never took the offensive during the night but delayed it till the crack of dawn and if the call for prayer was given, he first performed it. Here, too, he endured the night and ordered to march ahead before the call for prayer was given. The Muslims met the workers of Khaybar coming out with spades and basket. As soon as they saw the Apostle and the army, they turned on their heels shouting, "Muhammad and his force." The Apostle said, "God is Great. Khaybar is destroyed. When we fall upon a people the morning is bad for those who have already been warned."²

THE VICTORIOUS COMMANDER

The Apostle came at the fortresses and started overpowering them one by one. Marhab, the well-known Jewish warlord, held one of these citadels. It was a fortified stronghold at which the initial drives did not meet with success while 'Ali was suffering from ophthalmic. After a few unsuccessful charges, the Apostle said, "tomorrow I will give the flag to a man who loves Allah and His Apostle and he will conquer the fort." Every companion waited in suspense, hoping to be given the emblem. The Apostle summoned 'Ali, blew Ali's eyes with his saliva and prayed for his success. The eyes of 'Ali were cured in due time after which he was then given the insignia³ and told to fight the Jews until he prevailed over them. The Prophet said to 'Ali, "Go ahead and encompass them. First invite them to accept Islam and explain the obligations they owe to God. I swear to God that even if only one man is guided to the right path through you, this would be better for you than the red

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, pp. 344-46, Muslim, Chap. *Gazwah Khaybar*

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. III, pp. 229-30

³ *Bukhari and Muslim*, Chap. *Gawah Khaybar*

camels.¹

‘ALI FACES THE JEWISH WARRIOR

When ‘Ali came near the fort, Marhab, the Jew came out on his horse protected by armor and shield, reciting a poem about his valor. ‘Ali dashed out Marhab and both fell upon each other swinging their scimitars. ‘Ali’s sword was first plunged into Marhab running through his helmet and head until his face was divided into two equal parts. ‘Ali was at last successful in reducing the fort.²

Muhammad B. Maslama fought bravely at Khaybar and killed a number of well-known Jewish warriors.

AN EASY REWARD

The slave of Khaybar had been hired to watch over the flocks of his master. When he saw the Jews taking up arms in order to give Muslims a fight, he asked, “What for do you go?” The Jews replied that they were going to fight the man who had laid a claim to prophethood. The slave’s curiosity brought him to the prophet whom he asked. The Apostle replied, “I call you to Islam, that is, you bear witness that there is no deity save God and that I am the Apostle of God, and you serve not ought except God.”

“If I bear witness as you say,” Inquired the slave, “and have faith in God, what shall I get in return?”

The Apostle replied, “If you die with faith, you will enter paradise.”

¹ Bukhari, *Chap. Gawah Khaybar, Muslim, Nasa’i*

² The encounter between ‘Ali and marhabah has been reported by different persons – some say they fought for the fort of Na’im while other relate it connection with the forth of Qamus. Bukhari has given different portions of the story but has not mentioned the name forth. Ibn Hisham relates that Marhab killed by Muhammad B. Maslama but report in the Sahi Muslim mentions ‘Ali while some verse by ‘Ali leave no doubt that he fought and killed Marhab. (*Muslim, Kitab-ul-Jihad, tradition No. 1807*).

The slave accepted Islam and then asked the Apostle. "What should I do with this flock? I hold it in trust."

The Apostle told him to abandon the goats in the field near the fort and God would cause them to reach their owner. The man did as he had been told and the goats did find their way back to their master. The Jew also came to know that his slave has gone over to the fold of the Muslims.

Before the encounter started between the Muslims and the Jews, the Prophet urged his men to fight for the sake of God. The slave also advanced with the Muslims and was killed in the battlefield. When the Muslims brought his dead body, the Apostle cast a glance at him and turning to his companions, said, "Allah blessed this man and brought him to Khaybar. I saw two hours standing by his side although he never prostrated to God."¹

DEVOID OF ULTERIOR MOTIVES: "I DID NOT COME TO YOU FOR IT"

A Bedouin came to the Apostle and after accepting Islam expressed his wish to accompany him in the expedition. The Apostle asked some of his companions to take care of him and settle his needs. When the Muslims captured one of the forts and won a large booty, the man had taken out a herd of cattle for grazing. The spoil was distributed among the combatants and the share of the Bedouin was also apportioned. When he was given his share, he took it to the Apostle and asked, "What is it?" The Apostle explained that it was his share of the booty of war, but he said, "I didn't come to you for it." Then pointing to his throat he continued, "I followed you in the hope that I would be hit by an arrow here and would go to paradise." The Apostle replied, "If you desire it so, God will do likewise."

¹*Zad al-Ma'ad, Vol. I, p. 393*

Then, in a subsequent battle at Khaybar the dead body of the Bedouin was among those killed in the encounter. The Apostle asked, "Is it the same man?" When the companions replied in the affirmative, the Apostle remarked, "He was true to God and God made his wish come true." The Apostle shrouded his corpse with his own mantle and recited the funeral service for him. Thereafter, he said, "O Allah, thy servant had come to migrate in Thy way and was killed for Thy sake. I bear witness to it."¹

The people of Khaybar were beleaguered in their forts, which began to fall one by one. The Jews, unable to stand the siege any longer, asked for a peace pact. The Apostle wanted to displace the Jews from Khaybar, but they requested him to be allowed to live in their homes and to cultivate the fields. They pleaded that they were better farmers and knew more about it than others. The Apostle did not want his companions to till the soil since it would have required them to settle there and lay themselves out in farming. He, therefore, allowed the Jews to retain their farmhouses on the condition that the Muslims would get half of the produce of their fields and groves. Another condition imposed was that the agreement could be abrogated unilaterally by the Apostle.²

The Apostle delegated the production sharing to 'Abdullah B. Rawaha who used to divide the produce into two equal parts, and then ask the Jews to choose one of them. The Jews often remarked on his even-handed justice: "This is on which stand the heavens and the earth."³

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

The booty carried off by the Muslims in the battle of Khaybar

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 394

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 394-95. For details see Sinan Abu Dawud

³ *Baladhuri: Futuh-ul-Buldan*, Leiden, 1886, p. 34

included not few copies of the Jewish scripture. The Jews requested the Prophet for their retrieval to which the prophet acceded and ordered that they should be given back to them.¹

A Jewish scholar, Dr. Israel Welpenson, reviewing the conquest of Khaybar, refers to the magnanimous treatment of the Apostle towards the Jews in these words:

“The event shows what a high regard the Prophet had for their scriptures. His tolerant and considerate behavior impressed the Jews who could never forget that the Prophet did nothing which trifled with their sacred scriptures. The Jews knew how the Romans had, when they captured Jerusalem in 70 B.C., burnt their scriptures and trampled them underfoot. The fanatic Christians persecuting the Jews in Spain had likewise consigned their scriptures to fire. This is the great difference we find between these conquerors and the Prophet of Islam.”²

ARRIVAL OF JA’AFAR B. ABI TALIB

Ja’afar B. Abi Talib, the cousin of the Apostle and other emigrants returned from Abyssinia while the Prophet was still in Khaybar. The Apostle was so pleased to see him that he kissed the forehead of Ja’afar and said, “By God, I don’t know which gives me the greater pleasure – the conquest of Khaybar or the arrival of Ja’afar!”³

ANOTHER JEWISH CONSPIRACY

It was during the Khaybar expedition that an attempt was made to poison the Apostle. Zaynab bint al-Harith, the wife of Salam B. Mishkam presented a roasted kid to the Apostle, having first

¹ *Tarikh al-Khamis*, Vol. II, p. 60

² *Al-Yahud fi balad il’Arab*, p. 170

³ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 397

inquired what joint he preferred. Recognizing that the Apostle relished the shoulder, she put a lot of poison in it and brought it to him. The Prophet tasted a morsel and quickly threw it out for he immediately realized that it was poisoned.

The Apostle summoned the Jews and inquired from them, “will you be truthful, if I ask something from you?” They said, “yes”. The Apostle again asked them, “Did you poison the kid?” When they again replied in the affirmative, the apostle inquired what had made them to do that. They replied, “We thought that if you were a pretender, we would get rid of you but if you were really a prophet, the poison would be ineffective.” Zaynab bint Al-Harith was then produced before the Apostle. She confessed her guilt, saying, “I wanted to kill you.” The Prophet replied, “God would not allow you to gain power over me.” Some of the companions asked permission to punish the woman for her crime, but the Apostle forbade them. Zainab was set free, but when Bishr B. Al-Bara who had taken the roasted lamb with the Apostle died a painful death, Zaynab was slain.¹

EFFECT OF THE CONQUEST OF KHAYBAR

The glorious victory won by the Muslims at Khaybar was of far-reaching importance, especially for the tribes, which still had not accepted Islam. They were aware of the wealth and prowess of the Jews of Khaybar, their impregnable strongholds and valor of the well-known warriors like Marhab and Harith Abi Zaynab. They deemed its capture to be virtually impossible but their estimate of the nascent power of Medina had proved to be futile enough. They now knew that the Muslims’ arms were irresistible.

Discussing the effect of the victory gained at Khaybar on the subsequent history of Islam, Dr. Israel Welphenson says:

“There is not the least doubt that the conquest of Khaybar occupies an

¹

Bukhari

important place in the history of the subsequent conquests of Islam. All the Arab tribes were anxiously watching for the outcome of the saber rattling between the Ansar and the Jews. The enemies of the Prophet spread over many cities and the desert had pinned their hopes upon this battle.”¹

THE SPOILS OF KHAYBAR

Having finished with Khaybar, the Prophet directed his attention to Fadak,² which was the principal town, fertile and populous, in the northern part of Hijaz, with strong fortifications.³ The Jews of Fadak sent an offer of peace to the Apostle, on the condition that they should be allowed to keep half of their produce. The Apostle who used to spend the income from Fadak on the welfare of the Muslims accepted the terms.⁴

The Apostle then moved on with the army to the Wadi'l Qura,⁵ a colony founded by the Jews during the pre-Islamic period. Lying midway between Khaybar and Taima, it had become a flourishing town with the settlement of a number of Arab tribes in it. The Apostle invited the Arabs of Wadi Al-Qura to accept Islam. He told them that if they acceded to Islam, their life and property would be safe and they would have a goodly return from the Lord.

The Jews decided to fight, but the heroic assault led by Zubayr B. al-‘Awwam made them surrender that very next day. A great deal of property fell into the hands of the Muslims. The Prophet distributed the spoils among his troops but left the groves of date palm to the Jews.

¹ *Al-Yahud fi Balad il-‘Arab*, p. 162

² The population of Fadak consisted of the Jews belonging to Bani Murrah and Bani S’ad b. Bakr (*Nihayatul ‘Arab*, Vol XVII, p. 209).

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 368.

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ *Wadi-Qura* was valley with large number of village and towns, populated by Arab and Jewish tribes. It had a fertile land with numerous wells and springs.

When the Jews of Taima⁶ learnt about the fall of Khaybar, Fadak and Wadil-Qura and the terms on which they had made peace with the Apostle, they hastened to send him an offer of peace. The Prophet accepted their proposal and allowed them to retain the possession of their land and property. Thereafter the Apostle returned to Medina.¹

LARGEHEARTEDNESS OF THE MUHAJIRIN

The Ansar of Medina had shared their possessions with the emigrants when they had come from Mecca. Now, well provided with the spoils of Khaybar, the Muhajirin returned the property shared earlier by their Ansar brethren. Umm Sulaym, the mother of Anas B. Malik, had presented a few date-palm trees to the Apostle, who had given out these to his freed slave-woman Umm Ayman. After the Apostle got the groves of Fadak, he returned the date-palm trees of Umm Sulaym and compensated Umm Ayman with ten trees of Fadak for every date palm given earlier to her.²

The Apostle sent forth a number of raiding parties under eminent companions against some of the contumacious desert tribes. Some of these detachments had to put up a fight against them while others returned without any contest.³

THE MISSED PILGRIMAGE

The following year, in 7 A.H., the Apostle and his followers took the road to Mecca for performing the lesser pilgrimage missed by them earlier. The Quraish thought it best to lock their house and retire to the heights of Jabl Qa'yqa'an overlooking the valley.⁴ The

⁶ Taima is further away from Wadi-Qura in the north near the confined of Syria. The noted Jewish poet, *Sama'al b. 'Adiya* lived here in a castle called al-Ablaq al-Fard

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p 405

² *Ibid*

³ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 409-410

⁴ *Bukahri*, Chap. 'Umratul Qada.

Apostle stayed for three days in the holy city and made the circuit of the holy house. Referring to the joyous event, the Qur'an says:

“Allah hath fulfilled the vision¹ for his Messenger in very truth. Ye shall indeed enter the Inviolable Place of Worship, if Allah will, secure, (having your hair) shaven and cut, not fearing. But He knoweth that which ye know not, and hath given you a near victory beforehand.” (Qur'an 48:27)

RIGHTS OF WOMEN RESTORED

Islam had changed the hearts and elevated the minds of the Arabs. The custom which prevailed in the pre-Islamic days of burying female infants alive, so as to save the honor of the family, was not only given up but the daughters came to be so dearly loved that the people vied with one another to lavish their affection on them. All Muslims, men and women, were equal, none possessing any privilege over another; only he was superior who was better in morals and piety. When the Apostle left Mecca after performing the 'Umra, the little daughter of Hamza Umama by name, followed him calling “Uncle, Uncle.” Ali took her and bade Fatimah to look after her. Now Zayd and Ja'afar also claimed the guardianship of the child. 'Ali laid the claim for her since she was the daughter of his uncle. Ja'afar said that she was the daughter of his uncle and her maternal aunt was his wife. Zayd, too, wanted to have the child for all the Muslims were brothers and he could very well look after the daughter of a deceased brother. The matter was brought to the attention of the prophet who decided that the maternal aunt being in the position of the mother of the girl should be given priority and thus the girl was finally entrusted to Ja'afar. To set 'Ali at ease, the Prophet said, “You are mine and I am yours.” He reassured Ja'afar by saying; “You resemble me in your looks and conduct.” Zayd was also comforted with words, “You are my brother and client.”²

¹ The Prophet had a vision that he was entering the Sanctuary at Mecca in peace and safety.

² Bukhari, Chap. Kitab-ul-Maghazi

EXPEDITION OF MU'TA¹

The Apostle had sent Harith B. 'Umayr al-Azdi to deliver his letter to Sharhbil B. 'Amr al-Ghassani, a satrap of the Byzantine Emperor at Busara. Harith was first tied up under the orders of Sharhbil and then beheaded.² Howsoever a disagreeable message was conveyed by an embassy, it had never been the custom of kings to condemn the envoys to death sentence. The crime was disgraceful both for the sender of the letter and the addressee as well as fraught with danger to the envoys, and could not be allowed to go unpunished. The guilt of blood had to be avenged with firmness so that no tyrant would dare to repeat the crime in the future.

FIRST EXPEDITION TO THE BYZANTINE TERRITORY

The Apostle decided to send a detachment to Busra in Jama-al-Ula, 8 A.H,

A force 3,000 strong was drafted. It was the strongest force sent out so far and a number of leading companions had enlisted for active service, but the Apostle gave its command to his freed slave Zayd B. Haritha. He also instructed that if Zayd were killed then Ja'afar B. Abu Talib would take the command, and if he were also slain then the command would pass on to 'Abdullah B. Rawaha. When the expedition got ready to depart, the people bade farewell and saluted the commanders selected by the Apostle.³ The force had to undertake a long and arduous journey and to face an enemy backed by the strongest empire of the world.

¹ Mu'ta lies 12 km. To the south of Kirk in Trans-Jordan. Thus Mu'ta is at a distance of about 1, 100 km. From Medina. The troops sent for this expedition had cover the entire distance on horse and camels in an enemy country without any hope of assistance or provision being made available by the local population.

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 414.

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol . II, p. 373

The Force advanced to Ma'an in Syria where Zayd came to know that Heraclius was present at Balqa' with a hundred thousand Roman troops joined by an equally strong force drawn from the Arab tribes of Lakhm and Judham and Bal-Qayn and Bahra and Bali. The Muslims bivouacked for two days at Ma'an. Pondering over the situation, they decided at last to inform the Apostle about the strength of the enemy. If he sends reinforcements well and good, otherwise they could face the enemy, if so ordered.¹

DAUNTLESS WARRIORS

'Abdullah B. Rawaha made an impassioned speech encouraging his comrades, where he said: "Men, you dislike the thing, by God, for which you came out – martyrdom. We do not fight the enemy on the strength of our numbers, or our power; we fight them with the religion we have been honored by God. So come on, we shall be successful both ways; either we win or we court martyrdom." So the men got up and forged ahead to meet the enemy.

ACTION STARTS

When the Muslims reached near Balqa', they found the Byzantine force stationed in a village called Mashrif. With the news of the arrival of Muslims forces, the enemy advanced towards them, and the Muslim troops took up their position in a village called Mu'ta where the actual operation took place.²

Zayd B. Haritha, who held the Apostle's flag, descended on the enemy and died fighting bravely. He received innumerable wound spears. The emblem was now held by Ja'afar who led the fight. When the battle hemmed in, he jumped off his charger and hamstrung its forelegs, and fought until he lost his right hand. He

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad* Vol. I, p. 415

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol II, p. 377-78.

held the flag in his left hand which was later cut off together with his arm but still managed to get hold of it thru his teeth. He fell down dead in the battlefield after receiving ninety cuts from swords and spears on his chest and arms, but none so far from his back.¹ He was then 33 years of age.² Thus fought this young man with reckless courage in the teeth of greatest odds, defying the enemy's numbers and strength, until God honored him with martyrdom.

The Apostle's insignia was then held aloft by 'Abdullah B. Rawaha. He too dismounted from his horse and pressed onwards. One of 'Abdullah's cousins came up to him with meat bone, saying, "Take it for you have not had anything for the last few days. It will give strength to fight." 'Abdullah took it and ate a little. Then he threw it away and taking the sword in his hand fought bravely until he was also killed.³

KHALID ASSUMES COMMAND

Now the Muslim troops rallied around Khalid B. Walid who took the standard in his hand. With his strategic instincts, Khalid made his way to the south while the enemy forces turned aside towards the north.⁴ The day was done by this time and both forces, tired by daylong fight, thought it prudent to stop fighting. Khalid stationed a part of his force at a distance from his camp in the hush of the night. At the first flush of morning, the detachment set apart by Khalid started shouting cries of war, which gave an impression to the enemy that fresh reinforcement had arrived from Medina. The enemy had the experience of fighting the small force of 3,000 Muslims the previous day. Now they no longer dared to fight with them as they had been strengthened by additional troops. The Roman militia was disheartened and did not take the field.

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol III, p. 474 and *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 415

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 415

³ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 415, *Ibn Hisham*, Vol III, p. 379.

⁴ *Ibid*

Muslims were thus spared the trouble of putting up a fight again.¹

A GLIMPSE OF THE BATTLEFIELD

While the Muslims were engaged in fighting the enemy at Mu'ta, the Apostle was giving a description of the conflict in Medina. Anas B. Malik relates that the Messenger of God had announced the death of Zayd, Ja'afar and Abdullah B. Rawaha before the report about them reached Medina. Anas reports that the Apostle said: "Zayd took the standard and was smitten; then Ja'afar took it and was smitten, then Ibn Rawaha took it and was smitten", the tears meanwhile tricking down from his eyes. The Apostle continued, according to Anas, "Finally one of God's swords (meaning Khalid B. Walid) took the standard till God granted them success."²

JA'AFAR TAYYAR

Another report about Ja'afar says that the Apostle said about him, "Allah has given two wings to Ja'afar in place of his arms. He flies in the paradise, whenever he likes."³ Thereafter Ja'afar came to be known as Ja'afar Tayyar and Dhil Jinahin, meaning one who has two wings.

WORDS, KIND AND COMFORTABLE

The Apostle went to the house of Ja'afar and asked his wife to bring her children. When they were brought, the Apostle took them to his face, tears running down his eyes. Then he told them about the death of Ja'afar. When the news about Ja'afar reached

¹ *Al-Maghazi lil-Waqidi*

² *Bukhari, Chap. Gazwah Mu'ta.*

³ *Bukhari, Chap. Ghazwa Mu'ta and Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 415. Bukhari relates that 'Umar used to greet the son of J'afar thus: "Peace be on you. O son of the two-winged man."

the Apostle from the front, he sent a word to his family, "Prepare food for the family of Ja'afar. They would be too shocked to cook their food." The Prophet's face at that time reflected his grief.¹

NOT DESERTERS BUT BATTLERS

When the army returning from Mu'tah got near Medina, the Apostle and the Muslims went out to receive them. The boys also came running while the Prophet was on his camel. The Prophet said, "Take the boys and give me Ja'afar's son. Ja'afar's son, 'Abdullah, was brought to the Apostle who seated him in his front.

This was the first time that a Muslim army had returned without winning a decisive victory. Some of the people started throwing dust on the men, saying all the while, "You defectors, you fled from the way of God." The Apostle said, "They are not deserters, but battlers, if God wills."²

SUBSEQUENT EXPEDITIONS

In between the two major expeditions to Mu'tah and Mecca, some smaller expeditions were also undertaken. One of them was the raid of Dhat as-Salasil in the country of Khuza'a near Wadi-L-Qura, in Jamada-al-Ukhra, 8 A.H. The raiding party returned after smearing the enemy. Another raiding party consisting of 300 Ansars and Muhajirin was sent to chastise a clan of Juhayna. The army was exhausted with hunger and had to live a few days on the leaves of the tree until God brought them a whale named 'Anbar' from the sea. The men spent about fifteen days on the flesh and fat of the whale and regained their strength. They brought back a portion of it, which was taken by the Apostle who said to the men, "It was sent by God for you."³ This expedition goes by the names of Sif-al-Bahr and Khabat.

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 380-81.

² *Musnad Ahmad b. Hanbal*

³ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 417; Bukhari, Chapt. *Ghazwah Sif al-Bahr*.

CONQUEST OF MECCA

Background of the Conquest

The Muslims, having ingrained Islam in their hearts, had by then learnt about it thru experience. Allah had also subjected them to trials and sanitized their minds and motives. On the other hand, the Quraish of Mecca had disputed, persecuted, exiled and battled with the Muslims. In essence, they had been guilty of every sin of commission and omission against the Prophet and his followers. The Will of Heaven now declared that the Messenger of God and his companions have to enter the holy city as its conquerors and cleanse it of the defilement brought about by idol-worship, deceit as well as lies and wickedness. Divine Providence proclaimed that the sanctity of the sacred city should again be restored relegating it once again as the center of divine guidance and a blessing for the entire humanity.

DERELICTION OF BANI BAKR AND QURAISH

God instituted circumstances commensurate to the breach of faith by the Quraish who unwittingly provided a valid ground that made it unavoidable for the Muslims to lay their hands on Mecca – Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth. (Qur'an 48:7).

The treaty of Hudaibia allowed everyone to enter into an alliance with the Apostle of God and arrive at a similar agreement with the Quraish. Accordingly, Banu Bakr preferred to conclude a pact with the Quraish while Banu Khuza'a entered into a coalition with God's Messenger.¹

Banu Bakr and Banu Khuza'a, had a long-standing feud since the pre-Islamic days. With one of these tribes aligning itself with the Muslims and the other with the pagans, their mutual hostility was

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 390

further intensified. In fact, both tribes coalesced with the two respective parties solely for revenge upon each other. After the establishment of the armistice, Banu Bakr tried to take advantage of it against Khuza'a and, together with a number of other supporters, made a night assault on their enemy when it had taken up quarters near a spring. Fighting ensued between the two resulting to Banu Khuza's loss of a number of their men.

The Quraish helped Banu Bakr with weapons while their chiefs, taking advantage of the night, fought Khuza'a along with Banu Bakr. Their combined charge drove Khuza'a into the sacred territory where some of the Quraishites were heard telling each other: "We are now in the sacred area. Mind your Gods! Mind your Gods! But the others replied imprudently: "We have no God today. Take your revenge, O son of Bakr, for you may not give another shot at it again"¹

COMPLAINT TO THE APOSTLE

'Amr b. Salim al-Khuza'a, went to the Apostle in Medina and informed him how the Quraish had violated their pledge as well as asked the Apostle's help in view of the alliance forged between him and the Khuza'a. He swore that the Quraish had violated the treaty with the Prophet by assailing his allies when they were at their well and had not even spared their lives while performing prayers. After listening to his complaint, the Prophet replied, "You will be granted assistance, O 'Amr b. Salim."

LAST BID TO SEEK JUSTICE

The Apostle then sent an emissary to Mecca in order to confirm the situation and allow the Quraish to redress the wrong committed by them. The Apostle offered three alternatives before the Quraish. That they should either pay the blood money for the

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 419 and *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 390)

victims of Khuza'a or terminate their alliance with the aggressors belonging to Bani Nifasa of Banu Bakr and that failure to do so would mean that they shall get what is due them in return. The terms were relayed to the Quraish but in the fit of their pride they replied, "Yes, we would prefer measure for measure." The Muslims were thus absolved of their undertaking with the Quraish and it was now incumbent upon them to exact justice for the wrong done to their allies.¹

EFFORTS FOR RENEWAL OF THE TREATY

When the Apostle ﷺ was informed of the Quraish reply, he said, "I see as if Abu Sufyan has come to you to strengthen the treaty and to ask from me some more time." The events took shape exactly as predicted by the Apostle. The Quraish realized the gravity of the situation and felt sorry for the indiscreet reply given by the thoughtless among them. They requested Abu Sufyan to get the treaty ratified and extended once again.²

PROPHET PREFERRED OVER PARENT

When Abu Sufyan came to see the Apostle in Medina, he first consulted his daughter Umm Habiba, a wife of the Prophet ﷺ. He wanted to sit on the Apostle's bed but she prohibited him to do so. Abu Sufyan was puzzled. He said to Umm Habiba, "my daughter, I do not know if the bed is just too good for me or if I am just too good for the bed!" Umm Habiba replied, "the fact is that it is the Apostle's bed and you are an unclean polytheist. I do not want you to sit on the Apostle's bed." "My God", said Abu Sufyan, "You have been spoiled since you left me."

¹ Zirqari relates in the *Sharh al-Ladunniyah* (Vol. II, p. 349), on the authority of Ibn 'Ayidh that the man sent by the Prophet was Damra and Qartah b. 'Amr had given the reply on behalf of the Quraysh.

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 420; *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 395-6

ABU SUFYAN BEWILDERED

Abu Sufyan went to the Apostle but the latter did not entertain him. Then he approached Abu Bakr and asked him to speak to the Apostle in his behalf, but Abu Bakr refused to do so. He tried to prevail upon 'Umar, 'Ali and Fatimah to intervene for him but each one excused himself saying that the matter was too grave to be settled by anyone of them. Abu Sufyan so lost his nerves that when he went to see Fatimah he said pointing to Hasan b. 'Ali who was crawling in front of her, "O daughter of Muhammad (peace be upon him)! Will you let this child act as a peacemaker between the people so that he may be acknowledged as the lord of Arabia forever?" "My son is too young," replied Fatimah, "to make peace between men. And nobody can persuade the Apostle to reconcile against his will." 'Ali saw his perplexity and depression. At last, he said to Abu Sufyan. "I do not think that anything can help you now. You are the chief of Banu Kinana, so get up and try to smoothen over, restore harmony and then go back to your home." Abu Sufyan felt certain. He inquired, "do you think it would do any good?" "By God, I do not," replied 'Ali, "but there is nothing else you can do for now." Abu Sufyan then went to the Prophet's mosque and announced, "O Men, I have made peace between you." Thereafter he mounted his dromedary and rode off to Mecca.¹

When Abu Sufyan told the Quraish what had transpired, they said, "You had brought us a report which is good for naught either to us or to you."

AFFAIR OF HATIB B. BALTA'A

The Messenger ﷺ asked the Muslims to start making preparations for an expedition but at the same time also ordered them to keep it

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. pp. 396-7

a secret. Later on, the Apostle informed the men who intended to go to Mecca and ordered them to get ready for it. He also prayed, "O God, confound the spies and the informers of the Quraish so that we may take them by surprise in their land."¹

The Islamic society in Madina was, after all, a community composed of the mortals that epitomized like any other social groups, the passions and emotions, hopes and fears of the human beings. Its members were virtuous in behavior but sometimes; they are also prone to mistakes. Occasionally, they consider themselves right and rational in doing something new or not conventional. They maybe reasonable or not in holding a certain view, but it's always the case with every open and free society sustained not by constraints but by mutual confidence among its members. The Apostle never tolerated any wrongful act on the part of his companions, but given such cases, he either offered a plea to vindicate them or excuse their mistakes. The Apostle was large-hearted enough to pardon the mistakes of others, and in doing so he never forgot to consider the sad plight experienced by his companions or the sacrifices and services rendered by them for the cause of Islam. That a few instances of such indiscretion or lapses have been preserved by the compilers of Hadeeth, life of the Prophet and the historians of Islam, is in itself an intrinsic evidence of the integrity and truthfulness of these writers including those of their accounts.

One of these instances relates to Hatib B. Abi Balta'a, one of the Muhajirins who had migrated from Mecca and had taken part in the battle of Badr. It was related that when the Apostle informed his companions about his intention to attack Mecca, they quietly started making preparations for it. Hatib b. Abi Balta'a wrote a letter to the Quraish about the intended attack and gave it to a woman for its delivery to Quraish. Hatib also promised to give some monetary reward to the woman who left for Mecca after putting the letter on her head and folding her hair over it. A voice

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 421, *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 397

from heaven informed the Apostle about the action of Hatib. He immediately sent forth 'Ali and Zubair in pursuit of the woman, saying, "Go until you come to the meadow of Khaki,¹ where you will find a woman traveling on a camel who possessed a letter which you have to retrieve." The two went off racing against each other on their horses until they reached the designated meadow. There they found the woman mounted on her camel. They asked her to dismount and then thoroughly searched her baggage but found nothing. At last 'Ali said to her, "By God, the Messenger of Allah is neither mistaken nor are we. You must bring out the letter or we will search you personally." Sensing that they were being true to their words, she asked them to turn around. Then she drew out the letter from her tresses and handed it over to them. The letter, which was handed to the Apostle, had been written by Hatib b. Abi Balta'a informing the Quraish about the departure of the Muslim army. When summoned by the Apostle, Hatib b. Balta'a said, "O Messenger of God, don't be hasty with me. I swear to God that I have faith in Allah and His Apostle, and neither have I abandoned nor changed my faith. I had been consigned as an ally to the Quraish and was not one of them.² Other emigrants with you have their relations among the Quraish who will take care of their families. I thought that as I did not have that advantage, I should give them some help so that they might protect my relatives." 'Umar sought the Apostle's permission to cut off Hatib's head whom he charged as being a hypocrite, disloyal to God and His Messenger. But the Apostle replied, "he was present at Badr. Do you know, 'Umar, perhaps God has looked favorably on those who were present at Badr?" To Hatib he said, "do as you wish for I had forgiven you." 'Umar was reduced into tears, saying,

¹ A place between Mecca and Medina.

² Hatib b. Abi Balta'a belonged to the tribe of Lakhm settled in northern Hijaz and Syria. It is related by some that he was a confederate of Bani Asad b. 'Abdul ul-'Uzza in Mecca; others hold him to be under the protection of Zubayr; there are still others who say that he was a freedman of 'Abdallah b. Hamid al-Asadi (*Al-Isabah fi Tamiz is-Sahabah*, Vol. p. 300). It is also related that he was deputed to convey the letter of the Apostle to Muqqaqis, the ruler of Egypt. Marzbani lists him in the *M'ujam-us-Shu'ara* among the noted poets and cavaliers of the Quraysh. He died, according to Madani, in 30 A.H. during the caliphateship of 'Uthman.

“Allah and His Messenger know better.”¹

THE WRIT OF AMNESTY

A cousin of the Apostle whose name was Abu Sufyan b. al-Harith² happened to meet the Prophet along the way. He tried to accost the Apostle but merited a cold shoulder instead. Abu Sufyan had insulted as well as persecuted the Apostle in Mecca. Feeling distressed and disconsolate at the indifference of the Prophet, he approached ‘Ali to pour forth his frustration. ‘Ali advised him to go back to the Apostle and tell him that the brothers of Yusuf (Prophet Joseph) had said to him – ‘By Allah, verily Allah hath preferred thee above us, and we were indeed sinful.’³ For, continued ‘Ali, the Apostle never likes anybody to exceed him in words, kind and comforting. Abu Sufyan did as directed by ‘Ali and got the reply from the Apostle. “Have no fear this day! May Allah forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.”⁴ Abu Sufyan accepted Islam and was thereafter known for his piety and strength of faith but he was never ashamed of his past misdeeds. He always talked to the Prophet with downcast eyes and never looked straight unto his face.

ABU SUFYAN APPEARS BEFORE THE APOSTLE

Campfires were now lit under the orders of the Apostle. Abu Sufyan felt aghast as he saw them, and said, “I have never seen such fires and such an army before.” He came out to explore secretly the camp and its people. ‘Abbas b. ‘Abdul Muttalib had already left Mecca along with his family and joined the Apostle. He recognized Abu Sufyan’s voice and called him to say, “see, the Apostle is here with his army. What a dreadful morning the Quraish are going to have!” Abbas then thought that if any Muslim

¹ *Zad al-Mma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 421. The Sihah also relate the story

² Note to be confused with Abu Sufyan, the Qurayshite Chief, who was the son of Umayyah

³ Qur’an 12:91

⁴ Qur’an 12:92

learns about the presence of Abu Sufyan, he would surely be killed. So he asked Abu Sufyan to mount at the back of his mule and brought him to the Apostle. As soon as the Prophet saw Abu Sufyan, he inquired him, "has not the time yet come, O Abu Sufyan, for you to acknowledge that there is but only one God?"

"My father and mother be your ransom," replied Abu Sufyan. How kind, gentle and noble you are. I think that if there had been another god besides Allah, he would have been of help to me this day." The Apostle said again, "Woe to you Abu Sufyan, is it not the time that you acknowledge me as God's Apostle?" He answered, "My father and mother be your ransom. How kind and clement you are but I still have some doubts as to that."

'Abbas now intervened to say, "Abu Sufyan, woe to you, submit and testify that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Apostle of God before you lose your head." Abu Sufyan now recited the article of faith and thus he was converted to Islam.¹

GENERAL AMNESTY

The merciful Messenger of God had now forgiven the faults of all. It was the widest amnesty ever granted by any conqueror. Now, only he could lay himself open to danger, which was surely bent to prevail. The Prophet declared: "he who enters Abu Sufyan's house would be safe, he who shuts the door upon himself would be safe and he who enters the sacred mosque would be safe."²

Before ordering the troops to enter Mecca, the Apostle instructed his men to use their hands only against those that had obstructed their advance or drew swords with them. He also directed them to keep their hands off on any moveable or immovable property of the Meccans or refrain from destroying anything.³

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 403: *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 422

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 409

³ *Ibid*

ABU SUFYAN WITNESSES THE ARMY

Before Abu Sufyan returned, the Apostle showed him the strength of Islam. He asked ‘Abbas to take Abu Sufyan to a place where he could review the marching squadrons.

The army on the move surged like an ocean. Different tribes passed by Abu Sufyan replete with their tribal colors, and as each marched ahead he asked ‘Abbas of their respective names. After knowing the tribes, he mumbled gloomily. “What have I to do with them?” Finally, the Apostle's detachment came, with all the troops clad in full armor, appearing greenish-black. It was the regiment of the Ansar and the Muhajirin whose eyes were alone left visible because of their armor.

Abu Sufyan sighed and asked, “good heavens, ‘Abbas, who are these?” When ‘Abbas told him that they were the Ansar and Muhajirin accompanying the Apostle, he said. “None of them enjoyed this magnificence before. By God, O Abdul Fadl the empire of your nephew has grown to marvelous proportions this morning!” ‘Abbas replied, “Abu Sufyan, it is the miracle of prophet hood.” “Yes”, said Abu Sufyan, “that’s just it.”¹

Abu Sufyan hurried back to Mecca, assembled the Quraish and announced to them: “O people of the Quraish, this is Muhammad (peace be upon him) who has come to you with a force that you cannot resist. Now, he who enters Abu Sufyan’s house will be safe.” “God blast you”, cried some of the Quraish, “how will your house suffice for us?” He added, “And who shuts his door upon himself will be safe and he who enters the sacred mosque will be safe.” Thereupon, the people dispersed to take shelter in their houses and the mosque.

TRIUMPHANT ENTRY INTO MECCA

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, p. 404; *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 423

The Apostle entered Mecca with his head lowered in thanksgiving to Allah, his beard almost touching the saddle of his dromedary and the Suratul-Fatiha¹ on his lips,² to denote the honor and victory granted to him.

On the day the Apostle victoriously entered Mecca, touted as the religious and political center or better still, heart of Arabia, he instilled the principle of justice and equality to man as well as humility and submission to God, not missing even one cardinal virtue upheld by Islam. He seated Usama B. Zayd, the son of his ex-slave, with him on his camel although all the nobles of the Quraish and of his own family, Bani Hashim, were present on the occasion.

The Apostle entered Mecca on Friday, the 21st of Ramadan.

The day Mecca fell to the Apostle of God, he happened to talk to a man who began to tremble because of his astonishment. The Apostle consoled him saying, “be at ease and do not be afraid. I am not a king but merely the son of a Quraishite woman who used to take meat dried under the sun.”³

THE DAY OF MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

Sa’ad b. ‘Ubada passed by Abu Sufyan with a detachment of the Ansar. While marching ahead he shouted: “Today is a day of conflict, Sanctuary is no more, Allah has humbled the Quraish.”

In a short while, the Prophet’s regiment came near Abu Sufyan. He complained to the Prophet and repeated what Sa’ad had said.

¹ 48th chapter of the Qur’an, entitled ‘Victory’

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, p. 554, Bukhari relates on the authority of Mu’awiya b. Qarra that he saw the Prophet on the day of the conquest of Mecca, when he was riding his camel and reciting aloud the Suratul-Fath.

³ *Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Mughazi*, chap. The Farewell Pilgrimage.

The Apostle was displeased with Sa'ad's bragging and replied:

"Nay, today is the day of mercy and forgiveness. Today will Allah honor the Quraish, And raise the glory of the Sanctuary."¹

The Apostle sent somebody for Sa'ad and taking the emblem from him gave it to his son Qays. It meant as if the standard had not been taken away from him at all.²

Whatever the Prophet said or did, he was in fact guided from on High. The transfer of the standard was merely symbolic but not superfluous. The Apostle pacified, on the one hand, Abu Sufyan whose feelings had been hurt and on the other, had avoided doing anything painful to Sa'ad b. 'Ubada whose services for the cause of Islam were of no mean order.

A FEW SKIRMISHES

Safwan b. Umayya, Ikrima b. Abi Jahj and Suhaly b. 'Amr came up against Khalid b. Walid and tried to obstruct the advance of the Muslim forces. There were a dozen or so casualties before they finally gave in without any further bloodshed. The Apostle had already forbidden his troops to use their swords with anyone except upon those who resisted them.³

KA'BAH CLEARED OF IDOLS

Finally, when normalcy returned to Mecca and the populace had settled down, God's Apostle went to the sacred House of God. First he encompassed the sanctuary seven times. Ka'bah had at

¹ Ibn Amwi has told this story in Mghazi. See *Fath-ul-Bari*, Vol. VIII, p. 7. Bukhari has also related the incident, with a little variation, in the form of dialogue between Sa'ad b. 'Ubada and the Apostle. the full name of Ibn Amwi is Syahya b. Sa'id b. Aban who is regarded as a reliable narrator and known as 'the Truthful'. He died in 594 A.H.

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. p. 423

³ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. pp. 407-8

that time three hundred and sixty idols where he prodded each with a bow in his hand, saying:

*"Truth hath come and falsehood hath vanished away. Lo! Falsehood is ever bound to vanish."
(Qur'an 17:81)*

And the idols collapsed one after the other, falling on their faces.¹

There were also some images and figures in the Ka'bah. These were destroyed under the orders of the Apostle.²

PRINCELY GENEROSITY

Having gone around the sanctuary, the Apostle sent somebody for 'Uthman b. Talha, who was responsible for Ka'bah's keys. He took the keys from 'Uthman and opened the doors of Ka'bah. Once, before his migration to Medina, the Apostle had requested 'Uthman to give him the keys of the Ka'bah, but 'Uthman had not only refused his request but had also been impertinent to him. With exemplary forbearance, the Apostle then told him, "Uthman, the day will come when you will see this key in my hands. I would then give it to whom I would like."

'Uthman had then retorted, "If the day comes, the Quraish would be humiliated and crushed." "No", the Prophet had said calmly, it would be honored and secured." It is related that the prediction had so haunted Uthman's mind that he had come to believe that it would happen exactly as foretold by the Apostle.³

When the Apostle came out of the sanctuary he had the keys in his hands. 'Ali stood up and said, "May Allah have mercy and peace on you. Grant us the right of guarding the Ka'bah along with the watering of pilgrims." But the Apostle ignored his request and

¹ *Zad al-a'ad*, Vol. I, p. 424; *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 424

² *Zad al-a'ad*, Vol. I, p. 424; *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 411

³ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 425, also Bukhari

inquired, "Where is 'Uthman b. Talha?" 'Uthman was summoned and then the Apostle said, "Uthman, take the keys for these are yours. This is the day of good faith and benevolence. This key shall forever remain with you and none save a tyrant would take it from you."¹

ISLAM, THE RELIGION OF MONOTHEISM

The Apostle stood at the door of the Ka'bah, holding its frame, while the Quraish arrayed themselves in front of him in the courtyard. The Apostle then addressed them, saying:

"There is no God but Allah alone; He has no associate. He has made good His promise and helped His servant. He has alone overthrown all the confederates. Lo! All the privileges and claims of retaliation and bloodshed are beneath my feet except the custody of the Ka'bah and watering of the pilgrims.

O ye people of the Quraish, God has abolished the haughtiness of paganism and the pride of lineage. Man springs from Adam and Adam sprang from dust."

Thereafter, the Apostle recited the Quranic verses:

"O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware."
(*Qur'an* 49:13; *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 424).

THE PROPHET OF MERCY

The Apostle then asked the Quraish, "O Quraish, what do you think am I about to do with you?" "We hope for the best," They replied, "You are a noble brother, son of a noble brother."

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 425, also Bukhari and Ibn Sa'd

The Apostle said in reply, "I say to you what Yusuf¹ said to his brothers – "Have no fear this day; (Qur'an 12:92) go your way for you are all free."²

Then the Apostle ordered Bilal to climb on top of the roof of the Ka'bah and give the call for prayer. This was the first time that the chiefs and nobles of the Quraish heard the call to prayer reverberating in the valley of Mecca.

Thereafter the Apostle went to the house of Umm Hani bint Abi Talib, took a bath and offered eight ra'akats of prayer as a thanksgiving gesture for the victory that God had granted him.³

EQUALITY BEFORE LAW

Fatimah, a woman of Bani Makhzum, was in the meanwhile apprehended on the charge of theft. Her clansmen approached Usama B. Zayd in the hope that the Prophet, being well disposed towards him, might be able to intercede with him for the woman. When Usama mentioned the matter to the Apostle, he found his expression completely altered. The Apostle said to Usama, "Do you speak to me about the bounds put by God?" Usama felt so ashamed that he beseeched the Apostle, "O Messenger of Allah, pray to God to forgive me." In the evening, when the people convened, the Apostle said after praising God:

"The people before you were destroyed because they used to overlook when a highborn or a man of substance among them committed a theft, but when the poor or the weak did the same, they chastised him as ordained by the law. I swear by Him who holds my life that if Fatimah bint Muhammad had committed theft I would have amputated her hand."

The Apostle ordered to cut off the right hand of the culprit. She is

¹ Prophet Joseph

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 424

³ Bukhari, Chap. The Day of Victory; *Zad al-a'ad*, Vol. p. 425.

reported to have sincerely repented of her sin and led a normal life after marrying a man.¹

KINDNESS TO ENEMIES

Now that the victory was complete, all the citizens of Mecca were granted amnesty. Only nine persons were condemned to death. Of these was one who had been guilty of apostasy after accepting Islam, another man had deceitfully killed a Muslim while few others had been busy bringing down Islam and vilifying the Prophet. ‘Abdallah b. Sa’ad b. Abi Sarah had abandoned Islam. ‘Ikrima b. Abi Jahl so detested Islam that he had fled to Yemen. His wife became a Muslim and requested the Prophet to grant him immunity. ‘Ikrima was the son of Abu Jahl, the greatest enemy of the prophet, yet he was not only pardoned but when he came back to Mecca the Apostle accorded him a warm welcome. The Prophet rose to receive ‘Ikrima in such a haste that his robe even fell from his shoulders.

The Prophet was very happy to admit ‘Ikrima to the fold of Islam. Accorded a place of honor among the Muslims, ‘Ikrima distinguished himself by his deeds of valor in the battles fought with the apostates and the Byzantine forces. One of these culprits was Wahshi, the slave of Jubayr b. Mu’tim, who killed the Prophet’s uncle Hamza. The Apostle had condemned him to death but when he came to witness the truth in God, the Apostle accepted his allegiance.

There was also Habbar b. Al-Aswad who had attacked the Prophet’s daughter Zaynab. She had fallen from her litter and had an abortion. Habbar had also fled from Mecca but when he came back to accept Islam, the merciful Prophet also forgave him. Among those found guilty were two singing girls, Sarah and her friend, who used to sing satirical songs denigrating the Apostle. When immunity was demanded for them, the Apostle granted

¹ Bukhari and Muslim

them impunity from punishment and they in turn acknowledged Islam.¹

HIND ACCEPTS ISLAM

A large crowd of the citizens of Mecca who had embraced Islam had gathered together. The Apostle came to Mount Safa, where one after another, the Meccans moved up to take the oath of allegiance in the hands of the Prophet.

After the men had pledged their faith in Allah & the prophet, the women followed suit. Among them came the wife of Uthud, Hind b. 'Utba, who was the wife of Abu Sufyan. She came veiled because of what she had done to Hamza.

The Apostle said to her, "Take your oath that you would not associate anything with God." "By God", she replied, "You lay on us something that you have not laid on men." The Prophet said again, "And you shall not steal." Hind acknowledged, "I used to take a little of Abu Sufyan's money but I do not know if it was lawful or not."

Abu Sufyan was present on the occasion. He intervened to say, "In so far as the past is concerned, there is no blame on you. It was lawful. The Apostle now recognized Hind and said, "Ah! You are Hind bint 'Utba!" Hind said in reply, "Yes, I am, forgive me of my past deeds and God will forgive you." The Apostle again said to her, "And, you shall not commit adultery." "Does a woman of noble birth commit adultery?" she inquired in reply.²

Ignoring her question, the Apostle further said, "and you shall not kill your children." Hind answered back, "We brought them up when they were young and you killed them when they were

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. Vol. p. 25

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, p. 603

grown up. Now you and they should know better.” The Apostle asked her again, “And you shall not utter slanderous remarks about any body.” “By God”, replied Hind, “slander is vile and shameful. It is better sometimes to ignore it.” Finally, the Apostle said to her, “And you shall not disobey me.” “Yes”, acknowledged Hind, but she added, “in matters virtuous.”¹

INSEPARABLE FROM COMPANIONS

Allah had opened the gates of Mecca to the Prophet. It was the city of his birth as well as his ancestral home. Some of the Ansars prodded one another that since God had given power to the Apostle over his homeland and the city, he might better remain there instead of going back to Medina.

After a short while, the Apostle asked them what they were talking about. But nobody would squeal about their conversation. Initially, they were hesitant to open up, but later on they apologized and informed him about the matter. Thereupon the Apostle said to them, “God forbid, I will live and die with you.”²

SINNER TURNS INTO SAINT

Fadala b. ‘Umayr wanted to kill the Apostle. He disregards his plan to attack the Apostle when he would be busy in circumambulating the Ka'bah. When he drew near, the Apostle called out, “Fadala” to call his attention. He replied, “yes, O Apostle of God.” The Apostle then asked him, “what are you thinking about?” “nothing”, replied Fadala, “I was recollecting God.” The Apostle smiled and said, “seek forgiveness from God,” as he placed his hand over Fadala’s chest. The latter’s heart was at once set at ease and, as Fadala related later on, “The Apostle had not yet removed his hand off my chest when I found him dearer to my heart than any other creature of God.”

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 602-3.

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 416

Fadala further says, "Then I went back to my house and passed by a woman with whom I used to converse. She asked me to sit down and talk with her, but I replied, "No, Allah and Islam do not permit it now."¹

ALL TRACES OF PAGANISM ABOLISHED

The Apostle sent a few parties to destroy the idols installed in the city of Mecca as well as those around its vicinity in the valley. All of them, including those of al-Lat and al-Uzza and Manat-us-Thalathatal Ukhra were broken into pieces. The Apostle then sent a harbinger of news to announce that every man who had faith in God and in the hereafter should destroy his household idol. The Apostle also delegated some of his companions to the different tribes in the vicinity of Mecca to destroy the idols respectively worshipped by them.

Jarir relates that a temple known as Dhul Khlasa existed during the time when paganism prevailed in Arabia. Similarly, there were two more temples, one of these was al-Ka'baht-al-Yamaniyah and the other was al-Ka'baht-as-Shamiyah. The Apostle said to Jarir, "why do you not give me rest with Dhul Khalasa?" Jarir promised and went with a hundred fifty resolute horsemen of Ahmas² and broke up the temple as well as killed those who were present in it. When Jarir returned and gave the report to the Prophet, the latter prayed for the Ahmas.³

Thereafter the Apostle assembled the Muslims and announced that God has made Mecca a sacred territory forever. He said: "It is not lawful for anyone who believes in Allah and the hereafter to shed blood in the city or to cut down a tree. It was not permitted to anyone before me nor shall it be permitted to anyone after me."

The Prophet returned to Medina.⁴

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 417; *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 426.

² Ahmas (brave) is said to have been applied to Quraysh, Kinana, Jadila and Qays because of their horsemanship and bravery.

³ *Bukhari*, *Ghazwah Dhul Khalasa*

⁴ *Zad Al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 425-26

IMPACT OF MECCA'S CONQUEST

The conquest of Mecca had a tremendous impact on the Arabs. It was viewed as a great victory, for more than anything else, it reaffirmed the assertion that Islam was the religion of God which later proved to be instrumental in paving the way for its reception by the whole of Arabia. Tribesmen from distant deserts started coming to Medina in batches or sent deputations in acknowledgement of Islam. On the other hand, a number of tribes had treaty relations with the Quraish, which obliged them to keep away from the Muslims, whereas others feared or respected the Quraish as the guardians of the holy sanctuary. With the submission of the Quraish to Allah and His Apostle, all these obscurities vanished or were thus settled. There were also tribes who believed---the fate of Abraham still fresh in their minds, that no tyrant could lay his hands upon Mecca and therefore, they preferred to wait and see the result of the dispute between the Muslims and the Quraish. Some of them had actually decided to leave the Prophet alone and to accept him as the Apostle of God if he succeeds in winning over his own tribe.¹

When God rallied behind His Apostle to gain the upper hand over Mecca which finally prompted the Quraish to yield obedience to him, willingly or otherwise, the whole of Arabia succumbed to Islam. It yielded to it in a way unprecedented and uncalled for in a country known for its disorder and unruliness throughout the ages. The Bedouins had flocked to Medina, from every clan and tribe, to pay their respects to the Apostle and to accept Islam directly from him. It was then that God revealed Surah an-Nasr², which said:

"When Allah's succor and the triumph cometh and thou seest mankind entering the religion of Allah in troops." (Qur'an 110: 1-2)

¹ Bukhari on the authority of 'Amr b. Salama

² Meaning Succour

THE YOUTHFUL ADMINISTRATOR

The Apostle appointed ‘Attab b. Usayd to look after the welfare of the pilgrimage and other affairs of Mecca before leaving the city.¹ ‘Attab was then only twenty years of age. There were several other persons in Mecca, more experienced as well as prominent than ‘Attab, but his selection by the Apostle of God showed that he entrusted responsibility to a person solely on the basis of his merit and capability. ‘Attab continued to hold such position throughout the period of Abu Bakr’s Caliphate.²

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 440

² *Al Isabah and Usad-al-Ghaba*

BATTLE OF HUNAYN

The resounding victory of the Muslims over the Quraish and the ever-increasing conversions to the fold of Islam deeply frightened the enemies out of their senses. Thus, they made another attempt, as a last remedy of sort, to check Islam's fast growing power and popularity but all these failed, rendering their efforts completely inutile.

ASSEMBLAGE OF HAWAZIN

Hawazin were the old enemies of the Quraish who equated themselves as their rivals in power and prestige. The submission of the Quraish to the rising power of Islam had made them undisputed champions of paganism, as they began to harbor hopes of earning the laurels by bringing the Muslims down their knees. They saw a God-sent opportunity to build up their strength on the declining prestige of the Quraish.

The Hawazin chief, Malik b. 'Auf al-Nasari declared he was against the Muslims which was seconded by several other chieftains and tribesmen of Thaqif, Nasr, Jusham and Sa'ad b. Bakr. Two clans of Hawazin, Ka'b and Kilab, dissociated from Malik b. 'Auf, but the rest of the alliances commissioned their forces to charge upon the Prophet. They also took their cattle, women and children, staking everything on the looming battle, in order to ensure that everyone would fight to the last and that nobody would retreat or get back to their homes.

An old veteran Durayd b. Al-Simma, who was known for his competence in the art of warfare, also accompanied the Hawazin army that bivouacked at Autas.¹ Their camp reverberated with the groaning of the camels, braying of the asses, bleating of the sheep and goats as well as with the crying of the children. Malik instructed his men: "break your scabbards as soon as the Muslims

¹ A Wadi near Ta'if, in the territory of Hawazin, where the battle of Hunayn was fought.

are in sight and then attack them as one man.”¹

The Apostle had with him two thousand Meccans, some of whom were recent converts while others had yet to accept Islam, along with the ten thousand troops he had brought from Medina. This was thus the strongest force mobilized so far to defend the honor of Islam. The Muslims were naturally overconfident because of their great strength with some even exultantly boasting that there's no way they could lose for want of numbers.²

The Apostle obtained, on this occasion, some coats of mail and arms from Safwan b. Umayyah although the latter was yet a polytheist.³

NOT A SIGN OF IDOLATRY

The people of Mecca who had joined the Apostle in this battle were fresh from paganism. And during the days of heathenism, some tribes of Arabia used to venerate a great green tree known as Dhat-u-Anwat, under which they stayed for a day suspending their weapons thru its branches and offering sacrifices beneath it. When these men were traveling together with the army, they happened to pass by a big shady tree, which reminded them of the one they had adored in the past. They immediately requested the Apostle: “make us a tree, as we used to have Dhat-u-Anwat, O Messenger of Allah. “The Prophet replied, “God is Great! He, who holds my life in His hand, you say what the people of Moses said to him: Make for us a god even as they have gods. He (Moses) said: Lo! Ye are a folk who know not.” (Qur'an 7:138) The Apostle then added, “Verily, you would follow every custom of the people before you.”⁴

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 437-39

² *Tafsir Tabari*, Vol. X, pp. 63-64

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 440

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 442

IN THE WADI OF HUNAYN

It was the 10th of Shawwal, 8 A.H. when the army reached Hunayn. Descending the wadi in the morning twilight, the enemy had already taken its position. Through the glens, hollows or craters, the volley of arrows was all that the Muslims saw of the enemy, then suddenly the enemy followed up the attack with full force. Hawazin were celebrated archers.¹

The sudden assault forced the Muslim contingents to charge back and they fled in terror with none heeding the other. The battle had taken a dangerous turn, as a complete rout of the Muslims was already imminent without any possibility of an orderly retreat or rallying of their force again. As in the battle of Uhod, when the rumor of the Apostle's death had depressed the Muslims, the troops were once more driven to despair in Hunayn under a similar extent.

RIFT WITHIN THE LUTE

Some of the rude fellows from Mecca who had joined the Muslim army but were not strong in faith started talking about their dissatisfaction and frustration with Islam. One said, "their exodus will stop before they get at the sea." Another man remarked, "The spell of their sorcery has ended today."²

VICTORY AND PEACE OF GOD

The Muslims had to suffer this defeat after the brilliant victory at Mecca as if by way of punishment for reliance on their strength and numbers instead of the succor of God. Their faith needed to be sustained by a misadventure for they have to realize that both victory and defeat came from God and that neither one should

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 442.

² *Ibid* pp. 442-43

make man exultant or the other despondent. The Muslims were all too preoccupied with their miserable plight when the peace of God seemed to be descending on them and the Apostle. The Prophet had all the while stood firm on his place, riding his white mule, without any fear or shivers. Only a few of the Ansar and Muhajirin or of his relatives were then with him. 'Abbas b. 'Abdul Muttalib was holding the bridle of his mule while God's Apostle was calling aloud: "Verily, I am the Prophet without falsehood; I am son of 'Abdul Muttalib."¹

In the meantime, a detachment of the enemy advanced towards him. The Prophet took a handful of dust and threw it into their eyes.

When the Apostle saw his men in confusion, he said, 'O 'Abbas call out, O Ansar, O comrades of the acacia tree."² All those who heard the cry, responded, "Here we are ". 'Abbas had a loud voice. Whoever heard him calling got off from his camel and came to the Apostle. When sufficient number of men had gathered around, they rallied upon the enemy. A collision between the two parties started anew. The Apostle then proceeded to an elevated area along with some of his companions. He saw both forces grappling with one another, which prompted him to remark: "now the battle has grown hot."³ He then threw a few pebbles on the enemy. 'Abbas relates that he saw the enemy started becoming lackadaisical thereafter, finally conceding the day to the Muslims.⁴ Both groups of armies fought bravely. However, before all those Muslims who had fled away had returned, the enemy was discomfited and a party of handcuffed prisoners was brought before the Apostle.⁵ Allah helped the Apostle with the hosts of heaven to win the day and brought Hawazin to eventual

¹ According to Bukhari Abu Sufyan b. Al-Harith was holding the bridle.

² Refers to the companions who had the pledge of Rizwan at Hudaibia.

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 445

⁴ *Sahi Muslim*

⁵ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 445

surrender.¹

"Allah hath given you victory in many fields and on the day of Hunayn, when ye exulted in your multitude but it availed you naught, and the earth, vast as it is, was straightened for you; then ye turned back in fight" (Qur'an 9:25)

"Then Allah sent His peace of reassurance down upon His messenger and upon the believers, and sent down hosts ye could not see, and punished those who disbelieved. Such is the reward of the disbeliever. (Qur'an 9:26)

THE LAST ENCOUNTER

The bitterness and rancor borne by the pagans against Islam dissipated after the battle of Hunayn. The last stronghold of paganism was thus toppled down thru this battle such that no formidable opponent of Islam remained in Arabia. The surviving tribes proceeded to Medina from every part of Arabia to put their trust in Allah and His Apostle.

IN AUTAS

A part of the routed enemy fled to Ta'if and shut the gates of the city. The chief of Hawazin, Malik b. 'Auf, was also with them. A detachment sent by the Apostle under Abu 'Amir al-Ash'ari overtook another party of the enemy encamped at Autas, engaged it to a duel and routed it completely.² When the captives and spoils of Hunayn were brought to the Apostle, he ordered that they be brought to Ji'rana³ and be kept under custody there.⁴

The captives of Hunayn numbered six thousand. The spoils included twenty-four thousand camels, forty thousand or more goats and four thousand awqiya of silver. This was the largest spoil

¹ *Sahi Muslim, Kitab-ul-Jihad, Ghazwa Hunayn.*

² *Ibn Kathir, Vol. III, p. 460*

³ An stopover on the road leading to north-east from Mecca.

⁴ *Ibn Hisham, Vol. II, p. 459*

so far to have fallen into the hands of the Muslims. The Apostle had given orders to the troops before the conquest started mandating them to shun the women, children, men hired for non-combatant purposes and the slaves from the wrath of their hands. A woman was, however, killed in the process. This incident did not elude the Apostle causing him to feel remorseful about it afterwards.¹

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, p. 638

THE BATTLE OF TA'IF

FUGITIVES OF THAQIF

The warriors of Thaqif who fled from Hunayn returned to Ta'if. They closed the gates of the city after storing stocks of food enough to serve them for a year. Thus, they prepared themselves in time for another encounter with the Muslims.

The Prophet went at once to Ta'if. After establishing his camp outside the city, he set about besieging it in order to humble the enemy. The siege lingered on for sometime, but the Muslims, whose avenues of entry had already been blocked by the defenders, were unable to enter Ta'if. Thaqif combatants were good archers, so that the thick volley of arrows that they unleashed appeared like swarms of locusts.

SIEGE OF TA'IF

As the Muslims' camp was just within the range of arrows shot from the rampart of Ta'if, the Apostle transferred it to another side of the city. The siege continued for some twenty-five to thirty nights during which the two opponents fought tooth and nail to get the better of one another as they traded a barrage of arrows. The Prophet, used for the first time catapults in the siege of Ta'if whose ingress and egress were completely blocked. The arrows shot by the enemy had taken a heavy toll on the lives of several Muslims.¹

KINDNESS IN THE BATTLEFIELD:

When the siege did not deliver the desired outcome, the Apostle threatened to cut down the vineyards of Thaqif. The enemy was

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 478-83

extremely perturbed for its economy depended on the fine quality of grapes grown in these vineyards. Thaqif populace begged the Prophet in the name of God and their relationship with him to spare their orchards and farms as a whole. Taking pity on the enemy, the Apostle said, “certainly, I leave it to God and to the kinship between us.”

The Apostle issued a statement announcing that if any slave originating from Thaqif came to him from the city, he would be set free. One of the ten or more so slaves who deserted Ta’if was Abu Bakrah. Later on, he distinguished himself by his profound knowledge of the Traditions. The Prophet freed all of them and asked the Muslims to take care of their deeds. However, the people of Ta’if were greatly irked on the desertion of their slaves.¹

THE SIEGE RAISED:

Allah had not willed the fall of Ta’if. Umar was asked by the Apostle to announce the deferral of the siege and return of the army. Feeling disappointed, some of the people raised an outcry at the sudden order of retreat. They said, “Shall we go back without reducing Ta’if? “The Apostle replied, alright, mount an attack. They bore down on the enemy but were confronted with losses of lives. Then the Apostle said, God willing, we shall return very soon. The people then felt relieved and started making preparations for breaking the camp. The Prophet smiled when he saw them returning.²

THE SPOIL OF HUNAYN

On his way back from Ta’if, the Apostle stayed over Jirrana with his men. He intended to give an opportunity to the Hawazin to make amends by calling upon him and accepting Islam. Thereafter, he distributed the spoils, apportioning them first to those whose

¹ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. I, p. 457 on the authority of Ibn Is’haq

² *Ibid*

hearts were to be won. Abu Sufyan and his two sons Yazid and Mu'awiya were doled out handsome gifts. Hakim b. al-Hizam, Nadr b. al-Harith, 'Ala'b. al-Haritha and other Quraishite leaders were treated generously and then every man in the army was awarded his share of the spoils.²

LOVE FOR ANSAR AND THEIR SELFLESSNESS

The Prophet partitioned a large portion of the spoils to the Quraish who had to be reconciled to Islam while the Ansar was also meted out its petty share. Some of the lads among the Ansar aired their grievances at the meager gifts turned over to them. The Apostle ordered the Ansar to assemble in an enclosure. Then he delivered an extremely moving speech that tugged at the inner crevices of their hearts and which finally brought them on the brink of tears.

The Apostle said: "Did I not come to you when you were aberrant and God guided you through me; you were poor and God made you rich; you were divided and He softened your hearts to unite?"

The Ansar replied, "yes, indeed, God and His Apostle are most kind and generous."

But, the Apostle again queried: "o Ansar, why don't you answer me?"

They said, "what answer can we give! "O messenger of God, kindness and generosity belongs to God and His Apostle. "

The Apostle continued, "Had you wished, you could have said. And verily you would have spoken the truth and I would have acknowledged if you had replied, you came discredited and we believed you; you came deserted and we helped you; you were

² *Zad al-a'ad*, Vol. I, p. 448. Also see Bukhari and Muslim, Ghazwa Ta'if

fugitive and we gave you shelter; you were poor and comforted you.”

The Apostle then turned to speak out something which expressed the love he had for the Ansar and, at the same time substantiated the disparity in the distribution of the pillage. He said, “do you have some misgivings about me, O Ansar, because of what I have given to them for the short-lived bloom of this life by which they may become Muslims while I have entrusted you to Islam?” The Apostle then posed a question, which inflamed the Ansar's love for the Prophet. He inquired, “O Ansar, are you not satisfied that these men should take away sheep and goats while you go back with the Apostle of God? By him who has the life of Muhammad (peace be upon him) in His hand, what you take back with you would be better than the things with which they would return. Had there been no migration, I would have been one of the Ansars myself. If all the people go one way in a wadi and the Ansar take another, I would take the way of the Ansar. The Ansar are the undergarments and the others are the outergarments. O Allah, have mercy on the Ansar, their sons and their sons’ sons.”

All the Ansars wept until tears rolled down their beards as they said, “We are satisfied and happy that the Apostle falls to our lot.”¹

CAPTIVES RELEASED

A deputation of the Hawazin consisting of fourteen persons called upon the Apostle. They requested him to take pity on them and return their kinsmen and property. The Apostle replied, “You see the people accompanying me. What I like best is that you come out with the truth. Now tell me, which of the two is dearer to you?” Your children and your women or your property?”

¹ The incident has been narrated in Sahihain, but *Zad-al-Ma'ad* gives more details

They replied with one voice, "We treasure nothing more than our children and women."

Now, the Apostle advised them, "Tomorrow morning when I have finished the prayer you get up and say: We ask the Apostle's intercession with the Muslims and the Muslims' intercession with the Apostle that our children and women be returned to us." When they did as told by the Apostle he gave the reply, "Whatever was appointed to me and the Bani 'Abdul Muttalib is yours. To others I make a recommendation for you." Thereupon the Muhajirrin and the Ansar said, "Whatever share has been given to us is passed on to the Apostle."

The persons belonging to Bani Tamim, Bani Fazara and Bani Sulaym refused to leave their shares. The Prophet said to them, "These fellows have come after accepting Islam. I waited for their arrival and gave them choice but preferred nothing to their women and children. Now, if anybody has serfs whom he wants to donate cheerfully, the way is open to him. But if anybody does not want to do so, he may refuse. He who holds a right to such captives shall be given six shares in lieu of each from the first booty Allah grants us."

Everyone replied, "We give back our shares cheerfully for the Apostle's sake." The Prophet, however, said, "I do not know who among you is contented and who is not. You go back now and your chiefs will tell me correctly about your affairs." All of them returned the captives, women and children, and not one of them decided to retain his share. The Prophet also offered a garment to every released captive.¹

LOVING KINDNESS

Among the captives rounded up during the battle, the Muslims also took Shayma bint Halima Sa'adiya into custody. The men taking her captive did not know her although she told them that

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 449, Bukhari

she was the foster-sister of the Apostle. However, they did not mind her and proceeded to treat her roughly instead.

When Shayma was presented before the Apostle she said:

“O Prophet of God, I am your foster-sister.” The Apostle asked for a proof and she replied, “The bite you rendered me at my back when I carried you over my hip. The mark is still there.” The Apostle agreed and stretched out his robe for her to sit on then treated her courteously. He gave her the choice of living with him in affection and honor or going back to her people with presents. She chose to be reunited with her tribe. She accepted Islam and the prophet gave her three bondsmen, a slave girl and some goats.¹

THE LESSER PILGRIMAGE

After distributing the spoils and captives at J'irrana, the Apostle wore the Ihram needed in performing the lesser pilgrimage for this was the place from where the people going for pilgrimage to Mecca from Ta'if changed into Ihram. After completion of the lesser pilgrimage the Apostle returned to Medina.²

The Apostle came back to Medina in Dhul Q'ada, 8 A.H.³ While the forces were returning from Ta'if, the Apostle of God asked the men to recite: “We are those who revert and repent and worship and glorify our Lord.” Some of the people then asked the Prophet to call down evil on Tha'qif. The Apostle raised his hands to entreat, “O Allah! Guide Tha'qif on the right path and bring them here.”

‘Urwa b. Mas’ud al-Thaqafi met the Apostle while he was on his way back to Medina. He became a Muslim and returned to his people inviting them to Islam. He was very popular and enjoyed the esteem of his clansmen but when he broke the news that he

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 449

² *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 500

³ *Bukhari*, *Dhul Q'ada* is the 11th month of the Islamic Calendar.

had accepted Islam, the people turned against him. They shot arrows at him from all directions until one hit him eventually causing his death.

Thaqif waited for a few months after killing 'Urwa, but after having counseled among them, they have realized that it would be beyond their power to fight all those tribes which had already taken the oath of allegiance personally with the Apostle. Ultimately, they decided to send a deputation to the Apostle.

NO COMPLAISANCE TO IDOLATRY

When the deputation of Thaqif came to Medina, a tent was pitched for them in the Prophet's mosque. They requested the Apostle not to destroy their chief deity, the idol al-Lat, for three years. The Apostle refused, then they continued to reduce the period by one year, but the Apostle remained firm in his refusal until they finally settled for a period of one month after they had returned to their homes. The Apostle again rejected their request and ordered Abu Sufyan and Mughira b. Shu'ba al-Thaqafi to destroy al-Lat. Thereafter, the Thaqif asked the Prophet that they might be excused from offering prayers. To this the Apostle replied, "Nothing remains of a religion which has no prayer."

Abu Sufyan and Mughira b. Shu'ba accompanied the deputation of Thaqif when they returned to Ta'if. Mughira smote al-Lat with a pickax and broke it into pieces. Thereupon, the people of Ta'if accepted Islam liberating all of them from paganism.¹

KA'B B. ZUHAYR ACCEPTS ISLAM:

Ka'b b. Zuhayr paid a visit to the Apostle after the latter returned to Medina from Ta'if. Ka'b was a poet whose father had also been a versifier. He had composed many satirical poems ridiculing the

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 458-59

Apostle but when he fell on evil days, his brother Bujayr wrote to him that he should better go to the Apostle as a repentant sinner and accept Islam. Ka'b's brother also warned him of the dire consequences of disregarding his advice. Ka'b at last, came to the Apostle and composed the famous panegyric ode praising the Apostle beginning with Banat Su'ad.¹

When Ka'b came to Medina he called upon the Apostle just after the latter had finished the morning prayers and placed his hands in his. The Apostle, however, did not know who he was. Ka'b then said to the Prophet, "O Messenger of Allah, Ka'b b. Zuhayr has come as a repentant Muslim and asks for security from you. Will you accept his repentance?" One of the Ansars leapt upon him saying, "O Apostle of God, let me deal with this enemy of God. I will now cut off his head." But the Apostle asked him to leave Ka'b alone since he had come remorseful of his past deeds. It was then that Ka'b recited the well-known ode beginning with the verses:

"Su'ad is gone, and today my heart is love-lorn; Enthralled, put in chain, no bloodwit coming to unrein."

Then, in another verse he praised the Prophet thus:

"Indeed the Messenger is a light whence illumination is sought,
A drawn, sharp-edged sword, the sword of Allah."

The Apostle gave away his robe to Ka'b when he recited these verses.²

¹ Meaning Su'ad has departed

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 466-68. Qastalani relates in the *Mawahib*, on the authority of Abu Bakr b. al-'Anbari that when K'ab recited this verse, the Apostle gave his robe to him. Caliph Mu'awiyah offered 10,000 dinars for the Apostle's robe, but K'ab refused and said that he could not part with it for anything. Mu'awiyah obtained the robe, after the death of K'ab, for 20,000 dinars, from the heirs of K'ab. Qastalani further says that the robe remains with Caliphs for long time, (Al-Zurqani, *Commentary on Al-Mawahib*, Vol. III, p. 70).

THE EXPEDITION TO TABUK¹

Some of the tribes were still trapped in the delusion that the rise of Islam was transient like a cloudburst, which tide would be stemmed before long. It was therefore necessary to warn or even threaten such people before they device an opportunity to strike at the Muslims. The expedition of Tabuk had the desired effect on such lukewarm tribes much in the same fashion as the conquest of Mecca had gone a long way in eradicating the clouds of opposition. This expedition against the Byzantine Empire whose might and magnificence was well-known to the Arabs, virtually meant that the muslims were ready to throw down the gauntlet even to the greatest seat of power of the time. As to how much respect the Arabs had for the Byzantines whom they called Romans, is well illustrated by the remarks made by Abu Sufyan after he had seen Heraclius rendering honor to the Apostle's letter sent through Dihya b. Khalifa al-Kalbi. He had heard Heraclius saying that he, too, expected a prophet to be born. Abu Sufyan had then gotten up, as he related later on, rubbing his hands and saying that the affair of Ibn Abi Kabsha² (i.e. the Prophet) had become so great that the King of the Romans dreaded him. Abu Sufyan further says that he was then convinced that the Apostle would ultimately emerge victorious and this was how Islam originated in his heart.³

The Arabs could not then dream of attacking the Byzantine Empire, they themselves feared Byzantine invasion or rather did not rate themselves so high as to be capable of standing up against any great power. Whenever the Muslims of Medina were threatened or their safety was imperiled, their immediate action

¹ Tabuk is half-way between Medina and Damascus lying to the south-east of Aylah, the biblical Elath or 'Aqabah. Yaqut writes, quoting Abu Zayd, in the *M'o'jamm al-Buldan* that Tabuk is the fourth destination on the road from Hijr to Syria. It is reported that the Prophet Shu'eyb was sent to the people living there. Tabuk is at a distance of six days' journey from Red sea and lies between two mountains known as Hismy and Shibravi (Da'iratul Ma'arif Lil-Bustani). It is now a military cantonment in the district of Medina at a distance of 700 Km. from it.

² Abu Sufyan had used the name sarcastically since a man of that name belonging to Khuza'a had given up idol worship, or perhaps, someone going by that name was among the forefathers of the Prophet. (*Majm'a Bahar al-Anwar*).

³ Bukhari

was to seek the aid of the Gassanid King who was a plylarch of East Syria under the rule of Caesar. What 'Umar said during the affair of Aylah, which took place in the beginning of 8 A.H., shed sufficient light on the state of affairs during those days. He said that he had an Ansari friend who agreed with him to alternately remain in attendance upon the Prophet and inform each other about the incidents transpiring in one another's absence. 'Umar further said that in those days they were alarmed by a rumor that the Gassanid King intended to invade Medina and were thus constantly agitated by it. Once, when his Ansari friend came to his house and knocked at his door so he could enter, 'Umar inquired of his friend if the Gassanids had attacked Medina.¹

The Byzantine star was on the ascent in those days. Its armies had, under Heraclius, dealt a deathblow to the Iranian forces and carried their arms to the Iranian capital. The glorious victory was celebrated by the Emperor's stately march from Hims² to Ayleh³ in the seventh year of the Hijra. Heraclius himself carried, in the guise of a penitent pilgrim, the True Cross retrieved from the Persians while carpets were spread and rose water sprinkled beneath his feet all over the path by the people who went forth to meet their hero with tears and acclamations.⁴ Hardly two years had passed after the Emperor of the Romans won this splendid victory, when the Apostle led an army to confront him. The Apostle's daring venture left an indelible impression in the minds of the Arabs that it would be no exaggeration to claim that the expedition of Tabuk served as prelude to the conquest of Syria during the reign of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. The Tabuk Expedition really afforded the Muslims to a chain of victories, which eventually catapulted them as the masters of Syria.

¹ Bukhari and Muslim

² Emessa or Edessa

³ Elath or 'Aqabah

⁴ Muslim, Kitab ul-Jihad

What was the genesis of this expedition? It is related that the Apostle got reports of Byzantine forces converging in the northern frontiers of Arabia with the intention of mounting an attack on the Muslims. Ibn Sa'ad and Waqidi had reported that the Apostle was informed by the Nabataeans that Heraclius was intending to come upon him and that his advance party had already reached Balqa'.¹ This was after storing one year's provision for his army and drafting the pro-Byzantine tribes of Lakhm, Jodham, 'Amla and Ghassan under his banner.

Even if we ignore this report, it cannot be denied that the purpose of the expedition was to strike terror into the neighboring force, which was a potential threat to the rising power of Islam. The Apostle intended to forewarn the Byzantines that they should not consider the Muslims weak nor should they take any precipitate action to violate their territorial sovereignty. The expedition was thus considered a precautionary measure since one that does not have enough strength could neither dare shake one's fist at a great power nor could one take the risk of descending on its borders. It is certain, at all events, that the true purpose of the expedition was what the revelation in this connection had explained in these words:

"O Ye who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who keep their duty (unto Him)." (Qur'an 9: 123)

This objective was more than achieved as was subsequently borne out by the far-reaching consequence of the expedition. No retaliatory action was taken nor any detachments were moved to their borders by the Byzantines to drive back the Muslim army. The Emperor, exhausted by his Persian campaigns, remained an impotent spectator to the raids on his confederate border tribes or perhaps he thought it fit to wait and see before taking up the cudgels against the new power rising up in the East.

¹ Al-Zurqani, Commentary on Al-awahib, Vol. III, pp. 63-64.

The first rattle of the new Arabian power impressed the pro-Byzantine Christian tribes in northern Arabia. This was a great advantage accruing from the expedition of Tabuk for it made these tribes shift their allegiance from Constantinople to Medina which eventually led them to accept the religious aspects akin to the Islamic power. The Expedition also went as far as proving that the rise of Islam was for real and not just meteoric, or not one, which is designed to burst like a bubble as some of the Arabs had hitherto been thinking about it. Moreover, the expedition showed that its climb to power was solid as a rock with a great future lying ahead of it. In fact, severance of the ties between these border tribes and the Byzantium was a prerequisite before they could concentrate on Islam, their new source of power and strength which was taking roots and shaping up in their own homeland. The divine revelation, too, makes an allusion to this aspect of the expedition as culled from a verse of Surah at-Taubah:

“Nor step they any step that angereth the disbelievers, nor gain they from enemy a gain, but a good deed is recorded for them therefore.” (Qur’an 9:120).

The battle of Mu’tah was still fresh in the minds of the Byzantines who had failed to humble the Muslim army in spite of their numerous soldiers. The Muslims, on the other hand, having once traded swords with the Byzantines, had overcome their traditional terror of the impregnable Roman legions. In short, the expedition of Tabuk was a landmark in the life of the Prophet as well as in the continuity of the Islamic mission for it provided better opportunities on the future course of events leading to the glorious conquest of Islam evolving throughout the course of time.

THE TIME OF EXPEDITION

The Tabuk campaign was undertaken in the month of Rajab, 9A.H.¹ It was the time when the date palms had ripened and their shades were very pleasant. The Apostle undertook a long journey for the Tabuk expedition and traversed deserts and arid plains to face an enemy immensely great in numbers. As the Muslims were then passing through a period of drought, the Apostle told the companions beforehand, unlike in previous occasions, that he intended to fight with the Byzantines so that they might make suitable preparations.²

The hypocrites fell out on different pretexts. They either disliked strenuous wars against the powerful enemy or disliked going out in the oppressive heat. They even doubted the truth and had little interest in fighting for the sake of God, so they refrained from accompanying the Apostle on this occasion. God admonished such disaffected persons as is related in this Quranic verse:

"Those who were left behind rejoiced at sitting still behind the messenger of Allah, and were averse to striving with their wealth and their lives in Allah's way. And they said: go not forth in the heat! Say: The heat of hell is more intense of heat, if they but understood." (Qur'an 9:81)

¹ It is difficult to determine the period of Tabuk campaign according to the solar calendar. Some of the Prophet's biographers have computed that Rajab 9 A.H. coincided with November as computed by Habibur Rahan Khan in his Miftah-ulut-Taqwim. 'Allama Shibli also holds this view. But the internal evidence furnished by reliable Traditions included in the Sahihain and other trustworthy books of Traditions shows that the expedition was undertaken in the summer season. K'ab b. Malik says: "God's Messenger undertook it in extreme heat, facing a long journey, desert country and a teaaming enemy." Musa b. Uqba describes the journey to have been undertaken during "autumn nights in severe heat when the people take shelter under the date-palm trees..." Also, the plea of the hypocrites and its contradiction in the chap. Repentance (And they said: Go forth in the heat! Say: The heat of the hell is more intense of heat, if they but understood) leaves no doubt that the journey was undertaken during the summer season. Be that as it may, the internal evidence is so strong and irrefutable that it cannot be brushed aside, as certain historian have done, to hold the view that the expedition was undertaken in November instead of July-August, merely for the reason that it is now difficult to compute the dates given by the earlier biographers with the Gregorian calendar.

² Sahihain, on the authority of Ka'b b. Malik

ENTHUSIASM OF THE MUSLIMS:

The Apostle took particular care to make preparations for the expedition. He urged upon the affluent companions to donate considerably for the campaign resulting in the outpouring of donations that they had thus accumulated. Uthman spent one thousand dinars on the force known as “The Brigade of Distress” or “Jaish al-’Usr” and the Apostle invoked God’s blessings for him. A number of companions who were unable to raise money for their participation requested the Apostle to arrange the same for them. As their requests could not however be met for want of funds, the Apostle told them that their demands cannot be granted and so they went back disconsolate and disheartened. Some of them were so sorrow-stricken and depressed that God sent down the revelation exempting them from the obligation of joining the expedition:

“Nor unto those (is any blame) whom, when they came to thee (asking) that thou shouldst mount them, thou didst tell: I cannot find whereon to mount you. They turned back with eyes flowing with tears, for sorrow that they could not find the means to spend.” (Qur’an 9:92)

There were still others who could not make up their mind to participate in the campaign although their indecision was not because of any doubt or misgiving.

ARMY’S DEPARTURE FOR TABUK

The Apostle proceeded to Tabuk with a strong army of 30,000 from Medina. In no other drive, earlier to Tabuk, had such a large number of persons carried arms. Before the departure, the Apostle ordered the men to secure their camp at Thaniyatul-Wada. He put Muhammad b. ‘Maslama al-Ansari in charge of Medina and left behind Ali to look after his family. When Ali complained to the Apostle that the hypocrites were trying to spread false rumors about him, he replied, “Are you not content, “Ali that you are to

me as Haroon¹ was to Musa², except that there will be no prophet after me?”³

When the Apostle encamped at al-Hjir, the land of Thamud, he told the companions that it was the country of those who were being tortured for their sins. He said, “if you enter the houses of those who did wrong to themselves, enter tearfully with the fear that you may also meet the same fate that befell them.”⁴ He also instructed his men, “do not drink any of its water nor use it for ablutions. If you have used any for dough, then feed it to the camels and eat none of it.”

The journey was extremely arduous, and scarcity of water added to the misery of the army. When the people complained to the Apostle about their distress, he prayed to God and a cloud came down in torrents until every man had quenched his thirst and stored enough water to satisfy one's needs.⁵

DEMORALIZED HYPOCRITES

Some of the hypocrites kept abreast with the Apostle. While the Muslim army was headed for Tabuk, one of them said to another, but alluding to the Apostle, “do you think that the executioners of the Romans will deal with you in the same way as the Arabs do? By God, we seem to see you bound with ropes tomorrow.”⁶

TREATY OF PEACE WITH AYLAH'S RULER

Yuhanna B. Ru'ba, the governor of Aylah called upon the Apostle at Tabuk. Yuhanna made a treaty of peace and also paid the poll

¹ Aaron

² Moses

³ Bukhari, Ghazwah Tabuk

⁴ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. pp. 3-4; *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 522.

⁵ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 522

⁶ *Ibid*

tax. So did the people of Jarba' and Adhruh, and they were all granted peace as well as guaranteed safety of their territory and their ships and caravans by land and sea. The treaties were written by the Apostle and delivered to the respective parties. Yuhanna was cordially received by the Apostle and was given due respect.¹

BACK TO MEDINA

There was no commotion in Byzantium. When the Apostle saw that there was no movement of troops by the enemy who seemed to have abandoned the border towns, he gave orders for the return march. The expedition's objective having been achieved, the prophet did not consider it necessary to advance further in the enemy's territory to carry on the hostilities. Only a Christian chief, Ukaydir b. 'Abdul Malik, who was the ruler of Dumatul Janda² and enjoyed the patronage of the Byzantines, was reported to be harboring hostile designs. The Apostle sent Khalid with five hundred troops who captured Ukaydir and brought him to the Apostle. The Prophet, however, spared his life on the condition that he must surrender unconditionally and agree to pay the poll tax.³

After staying for a few nights in Tabuk, the Apostle returned to Medina.⁴

FUNERAL OF POOR MUSLIM

Abdullah Dhu'l-Bijadayn died at Tabuk. He had been too eager to accept Islam but his tribesmen had prevented him from his

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 255-26

² Dumatul Jandal was a populous town near Tabuk where the Arabs used to go for transacting business in olden time. Duma had been forsaken and was deserted when Ukaydir again developed the town and started olive plantations. The town thus regained its past importance. The place enclosed by a surrounding wall had a strong fort which made it an important outpost at the northern border. The town was populated chiefly by the tribe of Kalab and Ukaybir was known as the King of the town. He professed Christianity.

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 526

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 527

eventual conversion. At last they turned him over with only one coarse sheet of cloth in which he repaired to call upon the Apostle. By the time he came to the Apostle the sheet of cloth had been torn into two pieces, one of which was used by him as a loincloth and the other he had wrapped over him. Since the day he appeared before the Apostle in that condition, he came to be known as Dhu'l-Bijadayn.

When he died at Tabuk the Apostle attended his burial rites along with Abu Bakr and 'Umar. By the light of a torch, a grave was dug for him and the Apostle himself went down into it to put him to rest. While Abu Bakr and 'Umar lowered down the corpse of 'Abdallah Dhu'l Bijadyan, the Apostle said to them, "bring your brothers nearer to me." After the Apostle had laid 'Abdallah to his grave site, he said, "O God, I am pleased with him; be Thou pleased with him!" 'Abdallah b. Mas'ud used to say thereafter, "would that I had been the man in that grave."¹

TRIAL OF KA'B B. MALIK

Some of the Muslims who had stayed behind in the expedition of Tabuk, not for any doubt or disaffection, were Ka'b b. Malik, Murara b. al-Rab'i and Hilal b. Umayya. All of them had accepted Islam in the earlier stage of the Prophet's mission and had undergone hardships for the sake of their faith. Murara b. al-Rab'i and Hilal b. Umayya had also taken part in the battle of Badr. Actually, none of them had ever been languid in accompanying the Apostle in the previous battles. Therefore, their failure to do so in the expedition of Tabuk could have been brought about by the will of the providence who must have wanted to set another example of severe trial to test the strength of their faith for the benefit of the coming generations. They had been held back on this occasion partly on account of indolence and indecision and partly because of their reliance on worldly means and objects, or, perhaps, they had not given importance to the urgency of the matter as it

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 527-8

warranted. These are common human shortcomings, which have very often frustrated those who have been second to none in the sincerity of their faith in God and the love of His Apostle. In fact, this is the moral so pointedly illustrated by these words of Ka'b b. Malik.

"Everyday, I would go out to get ready for the journey so that I might leave with them, but I would come back not having done anything. I would say to my self, "I can do that whenever I want to", but continued procrastinating until the time for departure came and the Apostle of God left with the Muslims. And, I had still not made necessary preparations. I thought that I could go after a day or two and then join them. I went to make the preparations after they had left but again returned without having done what was necessary. Days passed by until I became sluggish while the army had gone far ahead at full speed. I still thought of leaving Medina to overtake them and I wish that I had done so, but I did not."¹

All the three companions were called upon to prove, in a way unknown to the history of any religion, the sincerity of their faith in God and their love for the Apostle. It was undoubtedly an excruciating trial of their loyalty to Islam, of their perseverance and tenacity in times of serenity as well as in difficulty, in cheer as well as despondency.

There is also no doubt that all these true-spirited companions spoke the truth when the hypocrites had offered excuses for justifying their absence from the expedition.

The incidents as related in the Traditions, on the authority of Ka'b b. Malik, are included in a narrative which speaks of his sincerity:

"Those who had stayed behind came and began to make excuses with oaths - there were about eighty of them - and the Apostle accepted their pleas,

¹ Bukhari, Kitab ul-Maghazi

administered oaths to them and asked divine forgiveness for them, leaving what they had concealed in their hearts to God. Then I came and saluted him and he smiled as one who is angry. He said, 'come nearer.' I went and sat before him. Then he asked, 'what had kept you back? Did you not purchase a mount? I replied, 'true to God, it was exactly so. O Apostle of God, were I sitting with anyone else in the world I would have thought of offering some excuses for saving myself from His anger as I know how to defend and justify myself. But truly, I know that if I were to satisfy you by telling a lie, God will soon make you angry with me. And if I displease you now by telling the truth, I have hopes that God would excuse me in the end. Honest to God, I have no excuse at all and I was never stronger and richer than when I stayed behind."

The hour of trial came at last. The Apostle forbade everyone to speak to the three who had made a clean breast. Such were those Muslims, who knew nothing but to listen and obey the Apostle, that not even the members of their own families would convey a word to these men. All the three felt forsaken and abandoned, and were confronted with loneliness akin to that when one is in a foreign land, having been treated as aliens in their own country. They endured it for fifty nights. Murara b. al-Rab'i and Hilal b. Umayya shut themselves up in their house, lamenting and shedding tears all the while. Ka'b b. Malik on the other hand, being young and sturdy, used to go out and join the prayer with others, then roam around in the market, but nobody seemed eager to keep him company much more accost him.

But such indifference did not widen the distance between them and the Apostle of God; nor was there any diminution in the loving regard that the Apostle had for them. The admonition by the Apostle rather gave rise to a still acute longing in them to regain the affection of the Prophet. The narration of Ka'b b. Malik, which bears freshness of the plain truth, goes on to say:

"And I would go to the Apostle and salute him when he sat with others after the prayer, thinking whether his lips had moved in returning my salutation or not; then I would pray near him and see

him with half an eye. I am sure that he set his eyes on me when I was busy in prayers but then turned away from me as soon as I tried to take a look at him.

The wide world seemed to have closed in on these men. Ka'b b. Malik relates about the behavior of one whom he considered to be his inseparable friend.

”When the harshness of the people became unbearable, I scaled the wall of Abu Qatada’s orchard and went to him. He was my cousin and held dearest by me. I greeted him, but, by God, he did not even return my salutation. I said: “O Abu Qatada, I adjure you by God, do you not know that I love God and His Apostle?” But he still kept quite, so I repeated my question again. He remained silent for a while and then said: “God and His Apostle know best!” At that juncture, my eyes gave way to tears and I jumped over the wall to go back.”¹

The ordeal, however, did not come to a close just like that. The ban was extended even to their wives such that the three were ordered to sever themselves from their respective spouses through divorce. All of them obediently yielded to the command.

The faith and loyalty as well as firmness of Ka'b b. Malik was brought to a yet more delicate and crucial test when the King of Ghassan tried to angle him with a silver hook. He was the ruler of a kingdom, which had exercised a deep influence upon the Arabs. In fact, the Arab nobles and chieftains vied with one another to be among the circle of his entourage or even to be invited to attend his court, in the same way that even eminent poets composed splendid eulogies in honor of the Ghassanid kings.² A Nabataean courier of the King contacted Ka'b b. Malik when the Apostle’s aloofness and the coolness of the people to him had become agonizing enough to drive him mad. The courier delivered him a letter from the King in which he had written: “we have learnt that

¹ Bukhari

² Hassan b. Thabit and other poets have immortalized the Ghassanid Kings through their glowing eulogies.

your master has treated you badly. God has not destined you to be humiliated and wasted, so come to us and we shall deal kindly with you.”

Ka'b took the letter to be a challenge to his integrity, but his conscience smote him to the point of tantalizing his love for God and His Apostle and so he took the letter to an oven and burnt it.

Their test was over at last. None of the three was found wanting. Then came the revelation from God, which illustrated their personal example to make it a general lesson, good for all times to come. They had demonstrated by their action that they could not flee from God, but could only find solace and refuge in coming back to Him. The spacious earth of God had become straightened for them; in their own souls they had a feeling of constraint, but they did not falter from the right path. Then it was that God forgave them and took them back to His grace. But, a noteworthy feature of the verse revealed on this occasion was that the Most Gracious God did not make mention of the repentance of these three persons or lest they might feel singled out and humiliated. Their penitence was spoken of after mentioning the contrition of the Apostle and other Muhajirins and Ansars who had been ready and willing to take part in the expedition. The revelation goes to show that whatever sufferings and hardships they had endured only raised the degree of their spirituality.

“Allah hath turned in mercy to the Prophet, and to the Muhajirin and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of hardship. After the hearts of a multitude of them had almost swerved aside, then turned He unto them in mercy. Lo! He is Full of Pity, Merciful for them. (Qur'an 9:117)

“And to the three also (did He turn in mercy) who were left behind, when the earth, vast as it is, was straightened for them, and their own souls were straightened for them till they bethought them that there is no refuge from Allah save toward Him. Then turned He unto them in mercy that they (too) might turn (repentant unto Him). Lo! Allah! He is the Relenting, the Merciful.” (Qur'an 9:118)

THE EXPEDITIONS AT A GLANCE

The Expedition of Tabuk, which took place in the month of Rajab, 9 A.H., was the last crusade during the lifetime of the Apostle. The actual number of battles fought was twenty-seven while he is reported to have sent out sixty forays and expeditions¹ although no fighting had taken place in many of them.

Never in the history of human conflict had any conqueror exhausted so little bloodshed yet achieved such a remarkable success. In all these clashes, only 1018 persons,² made up of Muslims as well as non-Muslims lost their lives. But, it would be to usurp the impossible to gamble any guess as to how much blood of the ferocious Arabs was saved from being spilled or how many souls escaped degradation and debasement because of this negligible loss to human life. Such was the public tranquility and orderliness resulting from the Apostle's campaigns that a woman pilgrim would go from Hira to Mecca and return after circumambulating the Ka'bah without any fear in her heart save that of God.³ Another report says that the women from Qadessia went alone on their dromedaries for pilgrimage to Mecca without the least anxiety or fear.⁴ This was the country in which, from time immemorial, fights and forays, or battles between nomadic tribes and raids on one another's flocks and properties had been an acceptable part of the desert life. Even the caravans of neighbouring powerful kingdoms dared not cross the country in pre-Islamic days without powerful escorts and guides.

The missions of the Apostle were warranted by two universal truths as enunciated in the Qur'an, in which one of these says that

¹ Estimate by Ibn Qayyim (*Zad al-Ma'ad*).

² Qazi Muhammad Sulaiman Mansurpuri gives this figure after a detailed study. (Rahmatulil 'Alamin)

³ Bukhari, Chap. 'Alamat an-Nabawah

⁴ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 581

‘persecution is worse than slaughter’⁵ and the other declares, ‘there is life for you in retaliation, O men of understanding’.¹ These twin principles, which aimed at the refusal to acquiesce in wrongdoing and urged to strive for the defense of honor and justice, soon established its most sought-after peace and order. This is at the minimum cost of labour and time on the part of the Muslims under the benevolent and altruistic guidance of the Apostle. The messenger of God was ever vigilant to secure the well-being and enlightenment of the enemy instead of allowing vindictiveness to govern over his campaigns. Whenever the Apostle sent out any detachment for forays or declared war against the enemy, he invariably issued strict instructions to his men to be God-fearing and kind to friends as well as foes. The directions he once gave to his troops were:

“I asked you to fear God and to be considerate to the Muslims with you. Fight in the name of God and slay those in his name who have disbelieved Him. Neither should you break your promise, nor pilfer the spoils, nor kill any child or woman nor man infirm and old or a priest who has withdrawn to seclusion. Never lay your hands on a date-palm, nor chop down a tree, nor yet pull down any building.”²

And, as to how successful these campaigns of the Apostle had turned out can be judged from the fact that within a brief period of ten years, more than a million square miles was won for Islam. Moreover, the Islamic state expanded at an average rate of some 274 square miles daily at the cost of one martyr a month.”³ This respect for human blood is unparalleled in the annals of man’s history. The truth of this assertion is better understood if the losses of these crusades are placed beside the casualties of the last two world wars, the first of which was fought from 1914 to 1918 and the second from 1939 to 1945. According to the computation

⁵ Qur’an 2:191

¹ Qur’an 2:179

² Waqidi, on the authority of Zayd b. Arqam in connexion with the expedition of Mu’ta.

³ Brig. Gulzar Ahmad, *the Battles of the Prophet of Allah*, Karachi (1975), p. 28

of the Encyclopedia Britannica, 64 hundred thousand persons lost their lives¹ in the first war whereas the number of casualties in the second ranged between 35 to 60 millions.²

Yet, none of these two blood-tainted wars can claim to have done any good to humanity nor did they solve any problem of the world at all.

The ecclesiastical tribunals known as Inquisitions established by the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages for the trial and punishment of heretics are reported to have claimed 12 million lives.³

THE FIRST HAJJ

The pilgrimage was enjoined in 9 A.H.⁴ where the Apostle sent Abu Bakr in command of the pilgrims. The polytheists were, during the year, at their pilgrimage stations.⁵ Abu Bakr then led a party of one hundred Muslims.

The opening of Surah at-Taubah (9th Chapter of the Qur'an) were revealed after the pilgrims had left for Mecca. The Apostle sent for 'Ali and directed him to proclaim the verse at Mina when all the pilgrims had assembled thereafter performing the sacrifice. It signified the end of idolatry in Arabia for no idolater was allowed to perform Haj nor to circle round the Ka'bah in a nude state after that year. The divine revelation also commanded that if the Apostle was liable to fulfill any obligation under a treaty with the polytheists it would be discharged up to a stipulated period after which the pact would then be deemed inutile and immaterial.

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, (1974) Vol. 19, p. 966.

² Encyclopedia Britannica, (1974) Vol. 19, p. 1013.

³ John Devenport: Apology for Muhammad and Qur'an.

⁴ There are some scholars who hold the view that the command for Haj was received in the 6 A.H. Sheikh Muhammad al-Khudari takes this view in the *Tarikh-al-Tashr'at-al-Islami* (p. 25).

⁵ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p..543

‘Ali went forth on the Apostle’s camel and overtook Abu Bakr along the way, who asked ‘Ali if he had come to give orders to him or whether he had something to convey them. ‘Ali replied that he had only been instructed to convey orders to him. Thereafter, both proceeded to Mecca where Abu Bakr managed the arrangements for Haj. When the day of sacrifice came, ‘Ali proclaimed what he had been ordered by the Apostle.¹

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 543-46

THE YEAR OF DEPUTATIONS

Arrival of Deputations in Medina

Allah first caused the Apostle of God to prevail over Mecca then allowed him to return from the expedition of Tabuk with flying colors. Earlier to that, he had sent letters to the rulers within the country and to the kings and emperors of neighbouring lands inviting them to accept Islam. These were received by some with greatest accolades of honour, which sent back courteous responses. Some were astounded or diffident, whereas others were irreverent and insolent. God requited ere long the arrogant suzerains thru their lives or kingdoms or both and such had been prevalent in every one's mouth all over Arabia.

Mecca had been the spiritual and religious centre of Arabia. Submission of the Quraishite nobles to Islam was of greatest importance for the whole of Arabia. The airy dreams of those who had counted on the Quraish of bringing Islam to its knees had fizzled out. While those who were ambivalent, waiting to see the outcome of the struggle between the Muslims and the Quraish, found the potential obstacle in their acceptance of Islam vanished along the way. The noted Indian scholar of Traditions, Muhammad Tahir Patni (d. 986/1578) writes in the *Majm'a Behar ul-Anwar*.

“This was the Year of Deputation. For the Quraish were their religious leaders and guardians of the House of God, the Arabian tribes had adopted a policy to watch and wait in regard to Islam. When the Quraish finally bowed out to Islam, Mecca was captured and Thaqif also accepted Islam. They, too, realized that it would not be possible for them to resist its ascendancy. Then deputations started arriving in Medina from all over Arabia and the people entered the faith of God in legions.”¹ It was only natural that the

¹ *Majm'a Bahar ul-Anwar*, Vol. V, p. 272

Arab tribes stated earlier, had an enormous effect on the Arabs and prepared them to accept Islam. Representative parties of the Arab tribes started calling upon the Apostle to accept Islam in such a manner as if the beads of a broken rosary fell one after the other.

These deputations returned to their homes bolstered with new spirit of faith in calling their brethren to Islam to obliterate all traces of paganism in their tribes.

One such deputation came from the large tribe of Bani Tami with a number of its orators and poets and challenged the Muslims to a contest in oratory and poetry. The contest ended in establishing the superiority of Islam and its adherents. The chiefs and nobles of Bani Tamim acknowledged the superiority of the Muslim orators and poets, accepted Islam and left for their homes with valuable gifts offered to them by the Apostle. (Ibn Hisham, Vol. II, pp. 560-68).

The deputation of Abu 'Amir also came to Medina. Bani Sa'ad b. Bakr sent Damam b. Th'alaba as their representative to the Apostle. He accepted Islam and went back to his tribe determined to invite them to his faith. When his tribesmen gathered around him, the first thing he said to them was, "Woe be to al-Lat and al-Uzza!" "Heavens forbid! Damam", said they, "beware of leprosy and elephantiasis and madness!" Damam replied, "Confound you! By God, they can neither hurt nor heal. God has sent an Apostle and given a Book to him, and deliver you thereby from your present state; and I bear witness that there is no god but one God who is without any associate and that Muhammad is His slave and Apostle. I have brought you what he has commanded you to do and what he has forbidden you." And by the time the evening was over there was not a man or woman in his tribe who had not joined the fold of Islam.¹

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 574

The deputation of Banu Hanifa came to the Apostle. With it came Musaylama, the arch-liar who accepted Islam but later on turned apostate and stake a claim to apostleship. He was killed fighting with the Muslims.

The deputation of Bani Tayy also came to Medina bringing with them their chief and gallant cavalier, Zaydul Khayl. The Apostle of God changed his name to Zaydul Khayr¹ and he proved himself to be a staunch Muslim, strong in faith.

‘Adiy, the son of Hatim, whose name has long been proverbial for generosity, called upon the Apostle. Impressed by the courteous bearing and considerateness of the Apostle, ‘Adiy accepted Islam and said, “By God, this is not the way Kings behave.”

The delegation of Bani Zubayd also came to the Apostle. It was led by ‘Amr b. M’adikarib, the noted warrior of Arabia. Al-Ash’ath b. Qays came with the deputation of another tribe, Kinda. Then came the deputation from Azd and the envoys of the king Himyar, who brought a letter to the Apostle informing him about the acceptance of Islam by their tribes.

The apostle sent Mu’adh b. Jabal and Abu Musa to invite the people of Yemen to Islam. He also instructed them to make things easy and not make them difficult, cheer up the people and refrain from scaring them.²

Farwa b. ‘Amr al-Judhami was the governor of Ma’am and surrounding lands in Syria on behalf of the Byzantines. He sent an envoy to the Apostle informing him about his acceptance of Islam.

Banu al-Harith B. Ka’b, living in the territory known as Najran were converted to Islam by Khalid b. al-Walid, who stayed with the tribe and immersed them in the teachings of Islam. Khalid b. Walid came back to the Apostle with representatives of Banu al-

¹ *Zaydul-Khayl* means Zayd of Horses and *Zaydul Khayr*, Zayd of Goodness. The Apostle preferred good and meaningful names.

² *Bukhari, Kitab ul-Maghazi.*

Harith. When these men returned to their tribes the Apostle sent ‘Amr b. Hazm to fortify them in religion and to teach them the Sunnah and the rituals of Islam as well as to collect the poor-tax from them. Another deputation from Hamdan called upon the Apostle of God.¹

The Apostle authorized Mughira b. Shu'ba to break the idol al-Lat. Mughira and his friends broke the idol into pieces and then raised to ground the boundary-wall enclosing it. They returned the same day after accomplishing the task assigned to them and the Apostle praised them for it.²

The Apostle welcomed the deputation of ‘Abd al-Qays when it came to him but he also forbade them to use the glazed jars employed for brewing intoxicants. He since took the precaution ‘Abd al-Qays were addicted to drinking liquors.³

Ash’aryin and the people from Yemen came to Medina singing verse which expressed their eagerness to meet the Apostle.

Tomorrow shall we meet our soulmates,
Muhammad and his comrades.

When the Apostle saw them he said: “The people of Yemen have come to you. They have the tenderest mind and the gentlest hearts. Faith belongs to the Yemen and wisdom belongs to the Yemen.”⁴

The Apostle had sent Khalid b. Al-Walid with a party to invite the people of Yemen to Islam. He stayed there for six months, preaching the faith to them, but none had accepted his proposition. Thereafter ‘Ali was assigned the same task who was sent there and read out the Apostle’s letter to the people of Hamdan. The entire tribe entered the fold of Islam and ‘Ali

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 574

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, pp. 62-63

³ *Zad al-Ma’ad*, Vol. II, p. 28; Sahihain, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas

⁴ Bukhari, In another version “and understanding of Faith” also occurs after the word “wisdom”,

communicated the news to the Apostle. He prostrated before God in thanksgiving and then raising his head from the dust, said, "Peace be upon Hamdan, peace be upon Hamdan."¹

A delegation consisting of 400 men paid a visit to the Apostle from the tribe of Muzayna. Another deputation from the Christians of Najran called upon the Apostle. There came 60 people riding the mules, of whom 24 were chiefs and ecclesiastics including Abu Harith, the great scholar of their religion. The Kings of Byzantine honored him because of his extensive knowledge, gave him subsidiary stipends and had built churches for him. Few Qur'anic verses concerning these people were, on this occasion, sent down by God.²

The delegation from Najran had come to see the Apostle after he had sent a letter inviting them to Islam. They asked the Apostle a number of questions, which were answered by God in the verse included in Surah al-Imran.³ The Apostle of God proposed a Mubahala,⁴ that is, a solemn meeting in which representatives were to summon not only their men, but also their women and children, and to earnestly pray to God in invoking His curse on the party that belied His revelations. The Christians, being afraid to accept the challenge of the Apostle, declined. They presented themselves to the Apostle on the next day and begged that the protection of the Islamic State be granted to them in return for the tribute. The Apostle gave them a document specifying the tribute and sent Abu 'Ubayda b. Al-Jarrah with them. The Apostle also said, "He is the trustee of these people."⁵

The Apostle of God felt happy on the arrival of a deputation from Tujib. They asked questions about a number of things and the Apostle had the answers to their questions written for them. Then

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. II, p. 33

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. II, pp. 35-36

³ Verses 1 to 34 in the 3rd chapter of the Qur'an.

⁴ See verse 3:61 of the Qur'an and commentary thereon

⁵ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, p. 100; also see Bukhari

they made a request on being told more about the Qur'an and the Sunnah which caused the Apostle to express fondness for them. He instructed Bilal to entertain them well. However, they had only stayed for a few days with the Apostle but had already expressed the desire to return home. When they were asked why they wanted to depart so soon, they replied, "we want to go back to tell our people how we met the Messenger of God, what discussions we shared and what answers he had given to our questions." Thereafter they returned and again called upon the Apostle during the pilgrimage in 10 A.H. when the Prophet was at Mina.¹

A series of deputations also called upon the Apostle from Bani Fazara, Bani Asad, Bahra and 'Adhara, and all of them accepted Islam. The Apostle promised them the capture of Syria, but forbade them to have recourse to seers for divination of the future and commanded them to cease offering the sacrifices they had been doing hitherto. He also told them that only the sacrifice done on the occasion of 'Id-ul-Adhha was lawful for them. When the delegations of Bali, Dhi Murrah and Khawlan called upon the Apostle, he asked them about the idol of Khawlan.²

to which they had been paying divine honors. They replied, "God bless you! God has replaced it by what has been brought by you. There are, however, a few elderly persons and senile women who are devoted to it but we will break it when we go back."³

Deputations also came to the Apostle from Muharib, Ghassan, Ghamid and Nakh'a.⁴ The envoys of Arabian tribes coming to Medina learnt about Islam and its institutions, watched the graceful and genial behavior of the Apostle and benefited from the company of the Apostle's companions. Tents were often set-up for them in the courtyard of the Prophet's mosque where Muslims offering prayers and reciting the Qur'an can be viewed upon.

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. II, p. 43

² *Ibid.*, pp. 44-47

³ *Ibid.*, p. 47

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-55

They spoke plainly and frankly, asked whatever they wanted while the Apostle replied to their questions in all sobriety, explained the wisdom of Islam and quoted excerpts from the scripture which were instrumental to their certitude and peace of heart.

APOSTLE'S CONVERSATION WITH A PAGAN:

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the character of the Arabs was their openness, outspokenness or frankness to the point of being blunt and tough. The talk that Kinana b. 'Abd Yalil, a pagan chief, had with the Apostle of God illustrates the brusqueness of the sons of the desert.

Kinana said, "As for adultery, we mostly remain bachelors or cannot get married,¹ so we must need to indulge in it."

The Apostle replied, "that is unlawful for you. God has commanded; and come not near unto adultery. Lo! It is an abomination and an evil way." (Qur'an 17:32)

Kinana said again, "What you say about usury means our entire property is nothing but usury."

"You have the right," replied the Apostle, "to get back the original sum lent by you for God has ordered: "o ye who believe! Observe your duty to Allah, and give up what remaineth (due to you) from usury, if ye are (in truth) believers." (Qur'an 2:278)

"As regards wine," Kinana said further, "it is the juice of our lands and a must for us."

"Allah has forbidden it," replied the Apostle and then recited the verse, "O ye who believe! Strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows

¹ Kinana perhaps meant that they could get married as they were mostly out with commercial caravans

are only an infamy of Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed." (Qur'an 5:90)

Kinana again inquired, "what do you say about the idol Rabbah?" "Break it," answered the Apostle. Kinana and his companions were taken aback. They protested, "if Rabbah were to know that you want to break her, she would finish all of her priest!"

'Umar now intervened to say, "O 'Abd Yalil, woe to you! How ignorant are you?" What else is Rabbah except as a stone?"

Kinana and his friends replied angrily, "Ibn al-Khattab", we have not come to ask you." Then turning to the Apostle he said, "You may break it, but we cannot." "The Apostle then said to them, "I will send someone with you who will do it for you..." "The deputation then took its leave from the Apostle who gave them a go signal. Before leaving for their homes they requested the Prophet to appoint for them a leader. 'Uthman b. Abi al-As was selected by the Apostle to act as one. He was the youngest among them but the Apostle had noticed his keen interest in religion and he had also learnt some of the Qur'an before leaving Medina."¹

COMMANDMENT FOR ZAKAT AND CHARITY

The divine commandment making it incumbent upon the Muslims to pay Zakat i.e. a tax at a fixed rate in proportion to the worth of the property, was revealed in the ninth year of the Hijrah.² The Apostle sent the order for collection of poor-due to all the functionaries appointed in the areas where the people had accepted Islam.

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. II, p. 25

² *Tarikh Tabri*, Vol. IV, p. 724

THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE

Everything had come about as willed by Heaven. The faith in One God had cleansed and illuminated the souls. The devil within had been cast away together with the vileness of the pagan past as had the false deities been removed from the house of God. Once again, the believers were smitten with the love of God and their hearts were set on going around the holy sanctuary for it was already a very long time since they had been there. The mission of the Apostle of God was also nearing completion, as he was soon to bid farewell to his loving companions. And so, Allah permitted His Messenger to take them for pilgrimage, and thus, it was the first Haj of the Prophet in Islam.

EDUCATIONAL ASPECT OF THE PILGRIMAGE

The reason for the Apostle's setting out from Medina for the pilgrimage were many. He had to meet the Muslims coming from far and near to teach them the observances of faith and the rituals of Haj. To bear witness to the truth and thus finally redeem his pledge to God. To advise them as well as to give them final instructions which is to administer them an oath to follow his teachings and to trample under his feet the last remnants of the pagan past. His pilgrimage was, in truth and reality, better than a thousand sermons and lessons. It was an itinerant school, a mosque on the move or an ongoing training center, which imparted knowledge to the unenlightened, animated the languid and indolent souls and invested the weak in spirit with the power of faith. All this was achieved under the benevolent and affectionate care of the greatest teacher, the Apostle of God.

UNIQUE RECORD OF THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE

Minutest details of the Prophet's journey have been preserved by the most reliable narrators, the companions of the Prophet. It is a record so authentic and detailed that never before did there exist any historical document of such comparable genuineness, be that of an Emperor's itinerary or of the memoirs of any saint or scholar.¹

A SYNOPSIS OF THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE

We give here a brief outline of the journey undertaken by the Apostle which is variously known as Hujjatul Wad'a, (Farewell Pilgrimage) Hajjatul Balagh (Instructive Pilgrimage) and Hajjatul Tamam, (Compleitive Pilgrimage) but actually it was all these and much more than can be given a single name. More than a hundred thousand companions went along with the Apostle of God to perform the pilgrimage.

PILGRIMAGE PROCEDURE

The Apostle set out from Medina on Saturday, the 25th of Dhul Q'ada, after performing the four rak'ats² of Zuhr³ prayer followed by a sermon in which he explained the essentials of putting on the Ihram.⁴

The Messenger of God then went ahead raising his voice in praise of God: "At Thy service, O God, at Thy service, at Thy service; Thou hast no partner, at Thy service; praise and grace art Thine,

¹ For details see *Hajjatul Wad'a wa 'Umarat an-Nabi Sallahu 'Alaihi Wasallam* by Sheikh ul-Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariya and the introduction of the book by the writer.

² A section of the Islamic consisting of recitation of the Qur'an in the standing position, genuflexion and two prostrations. A prayer may consist of two more rak'ats

³ The time for prayer offered when the sun has begun to decline.

⁴ Lit. "Prohibiting." The pilgrim's dress consisting of two white cotton sheets of cloth, one of which is thrown over the back, exposing the arm and the shoulder, while the other is wrapped round the loins from the waist to the knee and tucked in at the middle.

and the Dominion: thou hast no partner.” The entire crowd chanted the Talbia¹ along with the Apostle where some curtailed a few words while others supplemented it with a few more in a tremor of excitement. But the Apostle did not admonish them. He kept on repeating the acclamation of God until he reached ‘Araj where he encamped. Abu Bakr and the Apostle rode on the same dromedary.

The courses in the journey ahead were at al-Abwa, the wadi of Asfan, Saraf and then Dhi tawa where he stayed during Saturday night. It was now the 4th of Dhil Hijja. The Apostle offered the morning prayer at this place and also took a bath. The caravan now directed its steps towards Mecca and entered the valley from its heights. It was an hour or so before noon when his glance fell on the Ka'bah. He exclaimed “O God, increase the honor and estimation, deference and awe of Thy House.” And then lifting up his hands, he raised his voice to say, “God is Great”. Then he said: “peace be upon Thee, O God; peace is from Thee; o Lord, cause us to live in peace.” The first thing he did on entering the sanctuary was to go straight to the Ka'bah. He kissed the Hajr Aswad, or the sacred black stone stationed in the south-east corner, and then moved on to encompass the Ka'bah seven times, commencing on the right and leaving the Ka'bah on the left. He went round at a slow pace.²

The Apostle was walking at a quicker step but the paces were not long. The seamless garment in which he had wrapped himself was thrown loosely over one shoulder, the other being left bare. Each time he passed the Hajr Aswad, he touched it with a stick in his hand and kissed it. Thereafter he proceeded to the Muqam--Ibrahim and recited the Quranic verse: “take as your place of worship the place where Ibrahim stood (to prayer);” (Qur'an 2:125) and then offered two Ra'kats of prayer. Going back to the

¹ Lit. “Waiting or standing for orders.” It stands for the words, given here, recited during the pilgrimage to Mecca declaring one's readiness to be present for the service of God.

² The act circumambulating the K'aba is known as ramal. For details see the books on rites of pilgrimage.

Hajr Aswad after the prayer, he kissed it again and then he brought himself to As-Safa from the opposite door. On reaching near As-Safa the Apostle said, Lo! As-Safa and Al-Marwah are among the indications of Allah. (Qur'an 2:158) I begin with what Allah began with." So he mounted it until he could see the House of God, declared God's Unity and proclaimed His greatness facing the Qiblah. He affirmed: "There is no god but God alone who has no partner, to Him belongs the dominion, to Him praises are due, and He is omnipotent. There is no God but God who alone has fulfilled His promise, helped His servant and alone routed the confederates."

The Apostle remained in Mecca from Saturday to Wednesday. On Thursday morning he came to Mina along-with the Muslims, performed the Zuhr and 'Asr¹ prayers and stayed there for the night. It was the night before Friday. After the sun had risen he moved for 'Arafat where he saw the tent set up for him at Namira. God's Messenger rested in the tent and when the sun had passed the meridian he ordered for Qaswa. When it was saddled for him he went down into the valley and addressed the people wherein he explained to them the fundamental principles of Islam and struck at the roots of Polytheism and ignorance. He commanded to treat as inviolable and sacrosanct the life, honor and property of every man, as warranted by all the religions and declared that all the usages and customs of the pagan past were trampled under his feet. The Apostle abolished the usury of the pre-Islamic days although he allowed recovery of the original sums lent to the debtors. In his sermon, the Apostle addressed the rights of women, threw light on the mutual obligations of the husband and wife and urged the people to deal kindly with and provide food and clothing to their spouses in a fitting manner. Thereafter, referring to the Book of God he told his companions that if they hold fast to it they would never fall into error. Finally, he told them that on the Day of Judgement, God would ask them about him, so what reply would they give on that day? The entire

¹ The time for prayer performed midway between noon and sunset.

congregation answered in unison that they would testify that he had conveyed the message and fulfilled his mission.

Then, raising his finger towards the sky, the Apostle said, “O God, be witness”, repeating it thrice. He also asked those who are present to spread it out to those who were absent.

The sermon ended, and the Apostle asked Bilal to give the call to prayer. After the call was over, he performed the noon and afternoon prayers, making only two Ra’kats for each. It was Friday, when the prophet delivered this sermon.

The Apostle then mounted his camel and came to Mauqif¹, the place of standing, where he remained atop the camel till sunset, lamenting, beseeching and glorifying the Lord. He appeared to be tormented and disconsolate, repeatedly raising his hands in prayer to his chest, like a man bereaved and an indigent crying for his livelihood. He was heard saying:

“O God, thou hearest what I say; and seest where I am; and knoweth what I conceal or reveal. Nothing can remain hidden from Thee. I am tormented, indigent and miserable, seeking refuge with thee as one who is sorrow-stricken and horrified. I acknowledge my sins and confess my faults. I call upon Thee like a beggar and cry unto Thee like an abased sinner. I beseech Thee like one who is dismayed and harassed, falling prone before Thee, and shedding tears, like one who has thrown oneself at Thy feet and is licking the dust. O God, cause me not to fail in supplication to Thee; be Kind and Merciful unto me: Lo! Thou art the best of all those who are implored and the Most Generous of all the Bestower.”²

It was then that God sent down the revelation; *“This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favor unto you, and have*

¹ A place in ‘Arafat still known by that name

² *Kinz ul-‘Ummal*, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas

chosen for you as your religion AL-ISLAM." (*Qur'an* 5:3) When the disc of the sun had disappeared, the Apostle took Usama up behind him and wended ahead slowly, holding the halter of his camel in a way that his head, lowered in submission to God, almost touched the saddle. The Apostle was repeating the Talbia: "At Thy Service, O god, at Thy Service..." and asking the people to proceed slowly and gently. He kept raising his voice in Talbia until he came to Muzdalifa. There he ordered Bilal to give the call for prayers and performed the sunset prayer before the camels were rested and unloaded. He recited the night prayer after the camels were relieved and then went to take rest and slept till dawn.

Having performed the dawn prayer early in the morning, the Apostle mounted on Qaswa and came to Mash'ar al-Haram, the sacred site in Muzdalifah, where he faced the Qiblah, supplicated God and declared His Greatness until the morning light was clear. Thus he glorified God before the sun had risen. Then he left Muzdalifa with Fadl b. 'Abbas up behind him on top of his camel, chanting the Talbia all the way. He asked Ibn 'Abbas to pick up seven small pebbles for Rami Jimar.¹ When he came to the middle of the valley of Muhassar, he urged his camel to go fast and passed the plain quickly for it was the place where punishment was inflicted upon the army of Abraha. The Apostle came to Mina and from there to the Jamratul 'Aqaba² There he threw the pebbles after the sun had fully risen and ended it with the recitation of Talbia.

Returning to Mina, the Apostle delivered a resolute address in which he dwelt upon the sacredness of Yaum An-Nahr³ and the significance God has assigned to the day. He elucidated the honor and distinction conferred by God on Mecca over all the cities of the world and called upon the people to follow whoever guided them in accordance with the Book of God. Then, asking the

¹ Throwing of the pebbles at the pillars, or Jamrah in Mina, which mark the spots where the Devil appeared to Ibrahim and Isma'il.

² There are three pillars, Ula, the first, Wat'a the middle and 'Aqa'ba, the last

³ The Day of sacrifice, the tenth day of Dhill Hijja.

people present there to learn the rites of pilgrimage from him, the Apostle urged them not to revert to the ways of the infidels, beheading one another after him. He asked those present to convey everything he had told them to those who were absent. Thereafter, he said:

“Worship your Lord, offer prayers five times a day, observe fast for a month (in Ramadan), obey those of you who are in authority and you shall enter the paradise of your Lord.”

The Apostle also said something to his companions on this occasion which alluded to his valediction and hence the pilgrimage came to be known as the Hujjatul Wad’a.

The Apostle then went to the place of sacrifice in Mina and offered sixty-three camels by his own hand – the number of sacrificial camels being analogous to the number of years he remained alive. He ordered ‘Ali to sacrifice the remaining ones to come- up with a total of one hundred camels sacrificed in his behalf. Having had completed the offering, he sent for the barber, got his head shaved and distributed his cut hair among the people. Then he returned to Mecca on his mount and went round the Ka’bah again. After that he came near the well of Zamzam and drank its water without sitting down, and returned to Mina on the same day. He spent the night at Mina where he stayed until the sun had passed the meridian; then he proceeded to stone the Jamrahs and starting from the first one he went on to throw pebbles on the middle Jamrah and finally on the last one. The Apostle delivered two sermons at Mina, one on the Day of Sacrifice, which has been mentioned earlier, and the next on the day after.

The Apostle remained at the place to perform the stoning of the Jamrahs on the three days after the Day of Sacrifice, known as Ayyam-I-Tashriq.¹ Thereafter he set forth for Medina.¹

¹ *Ayyam-I-Tashriq* comprise five days, i.e. from the 9th to the 13th of Dhil-Hijja.

Having arrived at Ghadir Khum,² the Apostle addressed the people again and said:

“Whoever loves me should also love ‘Ali. O God, hold him dear who is attached to ‘Ali and be hostile to him who bears ill-will to ‘Ali.”³

The Apostle stopped over for the night at Dhul Hulaifa. When the outskirts of Medina appeared, he raised his voice to say, “God is Great”, three times and then said, “There is no god but God. He is One, without any partner, to him belongs the dominion and the praise and He has power over all things. (We are) the returning and the repenting and the submitting and the worshipping; God has fulfilled His promise and helped His bondman and alone routed the confederates.”⁴

The Apostle entered Medina in broad daylight.

THE ADDRESSES OF THE APOSTLE

The sermons delivered by the Apostle on the Day of Sacrifice and on the second day of Tashriq are presented here, as both are fitting and eloquent as well as significantly instructive and good for all.

“Your blood and your property are inviolable sacredness of this day in this month in this city of yours. Lo! Everything pertaining to the days of paganism is wrongful. And claims of blood-vengeance

¹ The account of Farewell pilgrimage given here has been condensed from the detailed description given in the *Zad al-Ma'ad* (Vol. I, pp. 180-249). The matter pertaining to the legal aspect of the pilgrimage have been left out.

² A place midway between Mecca and Medina, about three Km. From Jahfa.

³ On the authority of Ahmad and Nassai. The reason for what the Apostle said on this occasion was the certain persons who were displeased with ‘Ali had made a complaint against him to the Prophet. These persons had been with ‘Ali in Yemen and suspected him being unjust in some of his decisions although their complaint was unfounded and based on misunderstanding (*Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, pp. 415-16).

⁴ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 249

reflective of the pre-Islamic period have been abolished. The first claim on blood I remit is that of ibn Sa'ad Rabi'a b. al-Harith who was suckled among Bani Sa'ad and killed by Hudhayl.

“The usury of the days of ignorance is abolished, and the first of the usury I abolish is that of my own uncle, ‘Abbas b. ‘Abdul Muttalib, for all of it is abolished.

“Fear Allah concerning women. Verily, you have taken them under God’s security and have made their persons lawful unto you by God’s word. It is incumbent upon them that they must not bring into your houses anyone whom you dislike; but if they do that then you have authority to chastise them, yet not severely. You are responsible for providing them with their food and clothing in a fitting manner.

“I have left among you something, by which, if you hold on to it, you will never go astray. What is that? It is the Book of God!

“And you would be asked by God about me so what would you say?”

The companions replied, with one voice, “We testify that you have conveyed the message and fulfilled your mission.”

The Apostle then raised his forefinger towards the sky and said thrice, “O God, be witness.”¹

The text of the other sermon, delivered by the Apostle, on the second day of Tashriq, is as follows:

O people, do you know in which city you are, what month and what day is this?” asked the Apostle from his audience.

They replied, “This is the sacred month, the day has a great sanctity and the city is the holy city.”

¹ Muslim, Abu Dawud and other books of Traditions, on the authority of Jabir b. ‘Abdullah

Resuming his address the Apostle said, "Your lives and your property and your honour shall remain sacred to the Day of Resurrection like this day, this month and this city. Behold! Take it from me so that you may live. Beware! Do no wrong. Beware! Do no wrong. Beware! do no wrong! It is not lawful for you to take anything from the property of a Muslim save by his consent. Every claim for blood-vengeance and bloodwit that was due since the days of ignorance is now abolished to the Day of Judgement. And the first claim of blood-vengeance that I remit is that of Ibn Rabi'a b. al- Harith b. 'Abdul Muttalib who was suckled among Ibn Laith and killed by Hudhayl. The usury of the pagan past is abolished as that of 'Abbas b. 'Abdul Muttalib.

"Time has completed the cycle to reach the same point when God created the heavens and the earth." Thereafter he recited the Quranic verse: "Lo! The number of months with Allah is twelve months by Allah's ordinance in the day that He created the heavens and the earth. Four of them are sacred: that is the right religion. So wrong not yourselves in them." (Qur'an 9:36).

"Behold! Do not become infidels after me, beheading one another. The devil has despaired of ever being worshipped by those who pray, but he will create dissensions among you. Fear Allah concerning women. You have claims on your womenfolk and they on you. They are saddled with the obligation not to bring in anyone whom you dislike, but if you suspect that you are disobedient, instruct and withdraw from them, and chastise them but lightly. You are obliged to provide them with food and clothing in a befitting manner for you have got them under God's security, and have a right to their person by God's word."

"Behold! Whoever holds anything in trust should return it to the person who had trusted him with it. The Apostle then asked, "Have I delivered the message? Thereafter he said, "Let him who is present convey it to him who is absent, for many a man to

whom a message is conveyed can better enshrine it in his memory.¹

¹ Ahmad, on the authority of Abu Hurra ar-Raqashi

THE ETERNAL REST

COMPLETION OF THE APOSTLE'S MISSION

After the religion brought by the Apostle had been made perfect and complete, God set down the revelation: "This day I have perfected your religion, completed my favors upon you, and declared Islam as your Religion". (Qur'an 5:3)

The Apostle of God had delivered the message truthfully. He had spared no pains nor did any hardship or sacrifice shake him. He had brought up the people who could be trusted to live up to the spiritual heritage of the prophets of God, who could shoulder the onerous responsibility of carrying the banner of Faith and Truth and to guard the message of God against every interpolation and mutation. God had even affirmed that they were capable of the obligation laid on them in the Quranic verse that says "ye are the best community that hath been raised-up for mankind, ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah." (Qur'an 3:110)

The Qur'an contained God's pure and holy truth, the source of inspiration and conviction to these people, which enjoyed the assurance of God from being eclipsed or from undergoing any corruption in its text.

"Lo! We, even reveal the Reminder, and lo! We verily are its Guardian."
(Qur'an 15:9)

On the other hand, God's help and victory came to invigorate the Prophet who saw the people entering the religion of God in large numbers. Delegations from Arab tribes followed one after another in rapid succession to pledge their allegiance to him. The lightning speed or the geometric growth, with which Islam gained converts, promised its victory over all other religions of the world. Even

God in Surah an-Nasr made an allusion to the rapid success of Islam.¹

*"1. When Allah's succor and the triumph cometh
"2. And thou seest mankind entering the religion of Allah in troops.
"3. Then hymn the praises of thy Lord, and seek forgiveness of Him. Lo! He
is ever ready to show mercy." (Qur'an 110:1-3)*

RECITATION OF THE QUR'AN AND DEVOTIONAL EXERCISE

The Apostle used to retreat into his mosque for private devotions during the last ten days of Ramadan, but during the last Ramadan of his life he had secluded himself for twenty days.²

The Qur'an used to be reviewed by the prophet with Jibra'il (Gabriel) once annually during Ramadan, but this was done twice in the year which he died. The Apostle at such a time told his companions that he had some vibrations or strong feelings that the time of his departure from the world was drawing near.³

That no man has ever had the glowing desire to meet the Lord as possessed by the Apostle, nor was the Lord himself less eager to have him in His presence, He now gave him permission to quit the fleeting world.

The companions of the Apostle held him dear like the apple of one's eye. His death was thus a shock more terrible than what they could be expected to endure. But God had in His infinite wisdom prepared them afore for that unprecedented heartache. The rumor about the Apostle's death had been circulated around in the battle of Uhud, but later on it came out that God had still not deprived them of the blessed companionship of His Apostle. Yet none of

¹ 110th Chapter of the Qur'an

² Bukhari, *Kitabul-A'itakaf*

³ Bukhari, *Kitab-ul-Manaqib*

them had regarded the Apostle as immortal for they knew that he would have to leave this world sooner or later. It was on this occasion that the revelation was sent down by God to forewarn Muslims. As the Quran says, "Muhammad is but a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. Will it be that when he dieth or is slain, ye will turn back on your heels? He who turneth back doth not hurt Allah, and Allah will reward the thankful." (Qur'an 3:144)

The earliest Muslims had been guided, trained and set right by the Apostle. Their hearts were harmonized with God and they were all put in harness at the great task of spreading the message of Islam to the farthest corners of the world. And they never had any doubt that the Apostle would one day be summoned by the Lord in order to be recompensed for the greatest service he had rendered to humanity. The verse: "When Allah's succor and the triumph cometh," had convinced the companions that it was but the first announcement of the Prophet's approaching departure from their midst. They were fully conscious of the fact that reference to the help and victory coming from God signified completion of the Apostle's mission.¹

Then, when the revelation came, "this day have I perfected your religion...", (Qur'an 5:3) a number of eminent companions of the Apostle were led to believe that the time for his final summons was drawing near.²

¹ Ibn 'Abbas says that so far as he knew alluded to the death of Prophet. Imam Ahmad who has handed down this Tradition from Ibn 'Abbas write: "On receiving the revelation, 'When Allah's succor and the triumph cometh' the Messenger of God said that he had been informed of his approaching death" (see *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*).

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, p. 427

ARDENT DESIRE FOR PROXIMITY TO GOD

After his return from the farewell pilgrimage, a number of things done by the Apostle indicated that he was nearing the journey's end¹ and he was now making preparations for meeting the 'Companion Most High.' Eight years after the battle of Uhud, the Apostle prayed over those who were slain there like one who was bidding farewell to the living and the dead. He then mounted the pulpit and said, "I am one who goes before you and I shall be a witness to you. Your appointed place is at the Hauz-I-Kauthar² where I find myself standing. I have been given the keys of the treasure of the earth, and I do not fear for you that you would become polytheists after I am gone, but I fear lest you should long for worldly things and perish like your predecessors."³

BEGINNING OF THE ILLNESS

The sickness of the Apostle began shortly before the end of Safar.⁴ Late in one night, the Apostle went to the cemetery of Medina, known as Jannatul Baqi, where he prayed for the dead and returned to his house. The next morning his ailment began.⁵ 'Aisha relates that when the Apostle returned from the Jannatul Baqi he was suffering from a headache and was muttering, "O my head." The Prophet said, "Nay, O my head! 'Aisha, O my head!"⁶ His pain increased. Then, in the house of Maymuna the Apostle called his wives and asked their permission to be nursed in the house of 'Aisha. All of them agreed and the Apostle came out walking

¹ A tradition relates that while throwing pebbles at the Jamratul 'Aqaba the Messenger of God stopped and said to them, "Lear your rites, for I do not know whether I am likely to perform the pilgrimage after this occasion."

² .Lit. the Pond of Abundance which is in Paradise.

³ Tradition has been accepted as authentic by all the scholars of Traditions.

⁴ .It was perhaps Monday, as most of the Tradition have reported.

⁵ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 642; *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, p. 443

⁶ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 663

supported by Fad b. ‘Abbas and ‘Ali. He had a cloth bound on his head and his feet were dragging as he came to the house of ‘Aisha.¹

‘Aisha tells that during the illness from which the Apostle never recovered he told her, “Aisha, I still feel pain from the food I took at Khaybar, now I feel my aorta being cut because of it.”²

THE LAST ARMY

The Apostle summoned Usama b. Zayd and asked him to lead an army to Syria. He ordered him to take his cavalry into the borders of Balqa and Darum in the land of Palestine.³

The leading Muhajirin and the Ansar and notable companions amongst whom the most eminent was ‘Umar, were enlisted in the Army. The Prophet asked Umar to join the army under Usama, which was encamped at Joraf, although his illness had taken a serious turn.⁴ Abu Bakr sent forward the Army under Usama after the death of the Apostle in order to grant his Master’s last wishes.

KEEN INTEREST IN THE DETACHMENT OF USAMA

The Apostle felt that the people were a bit sluggish in joining the army led by Usama. Certain people had even expressed their disapproval of putting a youth in command of a detachment made up of the best of the Muhajirins and Ansars. The Prophet came out in spite of his violent and recurrent headache ascended the pulpit and after glorifying God as becometh his dignity, said, “O people, dispatch the army of Usama. You criticize his appointment but you have done the same before about his father’s appointment. He is indeed worthy of the office of commander, as was his

¹ *Bukhari, Chap. Mard-un-Nabi.*

² *Ibn Kathir, Vol. IV, p. 449*

³ *Ibn Hisham, Vol. II, p. 642*

⁴ *Ibn Kathir, Vol. IV, p. 441*

father.¹ The Apostle descended the pulpit terminating his address, and the people quickly started making preparations for undertaking the journey. The Apostle's illness worsened day by day while Usama took his detachment out of Madina and took up quarters at Joraf about 5 Km. from the city so that the others, who are desirous of being enlisted in the army, might join him before his departure. In the meantime, the Prophet's condition grew worse while Usama and his comrades anxiously awaited the news about him.

It was then that the Apostle gave out his last two orders. They were to "dispatch the troops in the same way that they had been sending out the detachments earlier and allow no two religions to remain in the Arabian Peninsula and chase out all the idolaters from the country."²

SOLICITUDE FOR THE WELFARE OF MUSLIMS

Some of the Apostle's companions came to see him during his illness in the house of 'Aisha. He welcomed them and prayed for their guidance on the right path and invoked the help and blessings of God for them. Thereafter he said, "I enjoin you to fear God and assign you to His care after me. I am a warner unto you from God. Behold! Never give yourselves to arrogance and vainglory in the habitations of Allah's servants for God has told you and me: 'As for the Abode of the Hereafter We assign it unto those who seek not oppression in the earth, nor yet corruption. The sequel is for those who ward off (evil).'" (Qur'an 28:83) Then he recited another verse. (Qur'an 39:60) "Is not the home of the scorers in hell?"³

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. Hisham II, p. 650, Bukhari, *Kitab aul-Maghazi*. It has stated in another Tradition included in the section Gazwa Zayd b. Haritha that the Prophet also said, "By Good, he deserved to be appointed a commander; I loved him and after him, he is dearer to me."

² *Bukhari, Mard-un-Nabi*

³ *Baihaqi, as-Sirat an-Nabawiyah, Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, p. 502.

INDIFFERENCE TO THE WORLD AND WEALTH

‘Aisha relates that during his illness, the Messenger of God asked her, “Aisha, what has happened to those pieces of gold?” When she brought five or seven or nine dirham, he took them in his hands and said, “How shall I face God with these in my possession? Give these away in charity.”¹

ANXIETY FOR THE PRAYERS

While the Apostle was caught in a debilitating sickness, he inquired, “has everybody offered prayers?” Those attending him replied, “no, O Apostle of God, they are waiting for you.” He asked someone to bring water in a pan. After being served with his request, he took a bath and tried to get up, but fell unconscious. On regaining consciousness after a short while, he again asked, “has everybody offered prayers?” They replied, “no, O Apostle of God, they are waiting for you.” All the people were then sitting silently in the prophet’s mosque for the night prayer. Now Abu Bakr was considerate enough and concerned with the prevailing situation that he asked ‘Umar to lead the prayer. ‘Umar, however, declined saying that he (Abu Bakr) was more qualified than he was. Thus, Abu Bakr led the prayer during the period of the Prophet’s illness.

When the Apostle felt a bit better he came out taking the help of ‘Abbas and ‘Ali for the noon prayer. As soon as Abu Bakr came to know of the Apostle’s arrival, he tried to get back, but the Apostle directed him not to leave his place and asked the two who were supporting him to let him take the seat by the side of Abu Bakr. Thus, the Apostle performed the prayer sitting while Abu Bakr kept standing in the prayer.

Umm Al-Fadl ibn al-Harith says that she had heard God’s Messenger reciting Surah al-Mursalat (77th chapter of the Qur’an)

¹ *Musnad Ahmad*, Vol. VI, p. 49. The actual words of the Apostle were: “What would God’s Prophet think if he were to meet Him with these in his possession!”

at the sunset prayer. Thereafter he did not lead any prayer until God summoned him to His presence.¹

THE VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

Of the few occasions when the Apostle made for the pulpit during his illness, he once said while a cloth was tied around his head. “Behold, God gave one of His bondmen the choice between this world and that which is with Him, so he chose that which is with God.” Abu Bakr saw the significance of the Prophet’s word, for he knew that it was the Prophet himself who had been given that choice. He broke into tears and exclaimed, “Nay, our own lives and our children may be your ransom.”

The Apostle then replied, “Abu Bakr, have patience and don’t be hasty. Indeed, of all the people, the most generous toward me in regard to his life and property was Abu Bakr. And, were I to choose anyone to be my dearest friend, indeed I would choose Abu Bakr. But the love and concern for Islam take precedence above all others.” The Apostle also said in this occasion, “There shall be left open no door of the mosque save Abu Bakr’s” door.”²

DIRECTIVES FOR KINDLINESS TO THE ANSAR

‘Abbas and company happened to pass by a group of Ansars. They saw them weeping and asked, “what makes you weep?” They answered, “we have been recalling our meetings with the Apostle of God.” When the Prophet was informed of the incident, he came out, the end of his mantle wound round his head, and mounted the pulpit.³ He did not mount the pulpit again after that day when he praised God and extolled Him. Then he said, “I

¹ Bukhari, Chap. *Mard-un-Nabi*

² Bukhari, *Kitab us-Salat*

³ The Prophet’s sermon on this occasion accepted as his last sermon. It was delivered on Thursday after the mid-day prayer. Anas b. Malik who has handed it down. Says, “He mounted the pulpit on that day but he did not ascent it again. Thereafter He praised the Lord as is His due.”

commend the Ansar to you, for, behold, they are my inmates and bosom friends. They have fulfilled their duty, and now whatever claims they have on others remain to be required. Therefore, you shall welcome whatever is done by the good among them, and forgive those that do wrong.” (Bukhari, Fada’il Ashab)

LAST LOOK AT THE MUSLIMS IN PRAYER

Abu Bakr continued to lead the prayer. On a Monday morning, when the people were performing the dawn prayer, the Apostle of God lifted the curtain of his door and kept his gaze fixed in the worshippers for some time to see how they paid divine honors to the Lord. He perhaps wanted to see the results of his life-long endeavor and struggle, training and guidance. Or, perhaps, having ever been so much fond of prayers, he wanted to know how they were enthralled and lost in prayers in his absence as they had always been in his presence. What the Apostle saw was extremely satisfying. For, never had the mission of any prophet been carried out to completion in that manner. It reassured him that the attachment of the community he brought up to Allah and His religion was ever durable and undying, not transient to wear away after his death. God knows better how delighted he was, as his companions say, when his face was beaming with joy. They relate that “the Messenger of God lifted the curtain and kept his eyes fixed upon them, standing on ‘Aisha’s door. It seemed as if his face was an open scripture. He smiled and then laughed. We thought that we might be seduced or distracted from our prayers because perhaps, he was coming out to perform the same. But he told us to complete what we were doing and then he pulled down the curtain. And that was the day on which he died.”¹

¹ *Bukhari, Mard-an-Nabi*

INTERDICTION OF PRAYERS AT SEPULCHERS

The last words uttered by the Apostle were: “my God, ruin the Jews and Christians, for they have converted the sepulchers of their Prophets into places of worship. Let no two religions be left in the Arabian Peninsula.”¹

‘Aisha and Ibn ‘Abbas related that when the time for the Apostle’s eternal rest drew close, he had a black striped sheet over him. Often, he pulled it over his face and then having felt restless, removed it. It was in this condition that he said, “may the curse of God fall upon the Jews and Christian as they have turned the sepulchers of their Prophets into places of worship.” He was at the same time, warning the Muslims against such practice, too.

THE LAST COUNSEL

When he was about to breathe his last, he said repeatedly “Lo! Be careful of prayer and of those whom you possess or have under your charge.” He continued to repeat these words until they became inaudible but it appeared that he was trying to express them.²

‘Ali says that he heard the Apostle of God commending Muslims to be careful of prayer and the poor-due and to be generous to their slaves and subordinates.³

‘Aisha relates that while she has started reciting the last two Surahs of the Qur’an in order to blow upon the Apostle, he lifted up his eyes and said, “with the Exalted Companion! with the Exalted Companion!” Just at that moment ‘Abdurahman b. Abu Bakr entered the room with a green toothpick in his hand. The Apostle looked at it in a way that she thought he wanted it. She chewed it a

¹ *Muwatta Imam Malik; Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, p. 471

² *Baihaqi Imam Malik; Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, p. 471

³ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, p. 473 on the authority of the *Muwatta* of Imam Ahmad.

little to make it soft and pliable, and gave it to him. He rubbed his teeth with it as he used to rub before and tried to hand it over to her but it fell down from his hands.¹

She further says that a cup of water was kept near him. He dipped his hand in it and then wiped his face, saying, “there is no God but God. Verily, there are pangs of death.’ Then he lifted up his forefinger and said, “with the Exalted Companions” until his soul took flight to the regions sublime and his forefinger dropped on one side into the water.

“Aisha says that when the Apostle was about to leave them behind, he had his head on her thigh. He fainted in a split of a second and then regaining consciousness, looked up towards the ceiling, saying all the while, “verily, with the Exalted Companion!” And with these words on his lips, the Apostle of God was yielding his breath.

HOW THE APOSTLE LEFT THIS WORLD

When the Apostle abandoned this world, he had the entire Arabia well in his hand. The sovereign and rulers were scared by his rising power while his companions were ever willing to undergo any sacrifice, to lay down their own lives and to surrender up their wealth, property and children for his sake. Yet he left this world without a single Dinar or Dirham or a slave or a bondmaid in his possession. All that he owned at the time was one white mule, some weapons and a piece of land, which had already been given away in charity.²

The Prophet’s coat of mail had been pawned to a Jew for thirty S’as of barley³ when he died and nothing was left with him to retrieve it.³

¹ *Ibn Kathir, Vol. IV, p. 474; Bukhari, chap. Mard-un-Nabi.*

² *Bukhari, Mard un-Nabi*

³ *Ibid*

The Apostle restored freedom for forty slaves during his illness. Only six or seven dinars were left with ‘Aisha, but he asked her to give away even those in charity.¹

“Aisha relates that on the day the Apostle of God died there was nothing in her house which could be taken by a living being except for a little barley left in a cupboard. It lasted for a few days until she weighted it and that very day it was all used.

The Prophet died on Monday, the 12th day of Rabia ul-Awwal in the heat of the moon after the sun had passed the meridian. He was then sixty-three years of age. (As related by most of the Traditionalists) This was the darkest hour for the Muslims, a day gloomy and lamentable for the entire humanity just as his birth had signaled hope and cheerfulness for the whole world. Anas and Abu S’aid al-Khudri said that when the Messenger of God came to Medina, everything looked better and brighter but no day was worse or darker than the day he died. Some of the people saw Umm Aymaan weeping when the Apostle was bed-ridden. When they asked what had made her weep, she replied, “of course, I know that the Prophet of God will quite leave this world but I am weeping because the revelation from heaven has come to an end.”²

BEWILDERMENT OF THE COMPANIONS

The news of the Prophet’s demise fell like a thunderbolt on his companions. All were stunned because of the ardent love and esteem they had for him. Such was their reliance on his loving care as the children are assured of the protection of their parents. Their agonizing distress was not at all unusual for God has himself spoken of the Apostle’s concern for his followers.

³ Baihaqi, p. 562

¹ Al-Siratul Halabiyah, Vol. III, p. 381

² Ibn Kathir, Vol. IV, pp. 544-46

“There hath come unto you a Messenger, (one) of yourselves, unto whom aught that ye are overburdened is grievous, full of concern for you, for the believers full of pity, merciful.” (Qur’an 9:128)

The prophet was so gracious and considerate that his every companion believed himself to be the closest to him and never had any misgivings about his love and confidence. It was the reliance born of absolute trust mingled with devotion that had made it difficult for some to think of the day when the Prophet would depart from this world leaving them alone. One of these was ‘Umar, who had been one of the closest to the Apostle, and when he was told that the Messenger of God was already dead, he protested violently. He went so far as to address the people in the Prophet’s mosque and told them that God’s Apostle would not quit this world until God had destroyed the hypocrites.¹

THE COURAGEOUS PROCLAMATION BY ABU BAKR

A Man of determination and courage was needed at this difficult hour. And, this man was Abu Bakr, the most senior of the Prophet’s companions, who had been picked out by God to take over the place of the Prophet with a firm hand. When the news reached him, he hurried back from his house. For a moment he stopped at the door of the mosque where ‘Umar was resolutely speaking to the people. Without paying heed to any body he proceeded to Aisha’s room where the dead body of the Prophet lay covered with mantle. He uncovered the Apostle’s face and kissed him. Then, he proceeded to say “My father and mother be your ransom. You have tasted the death God had decreed for you, a second death will never overtake you.” Replacing the mantle on the Apostle’s face, he then went out to the Mosque. ‘Umar was still making an address to the people, so he said gently, “Umar, keep quite.” But ‘Umar was too excited to listen to Abubakr. Now, Abu Bakr realized that ‘Umar was not in a mood to terminate his speech. So he stepped forward and called out the people,

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, pp. 544-46

whereupon they came round him leaving ‘Umar. Abu Bakr praised God and then said:

“O Men, if anyone worship Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead. But if anyone worships God, then God is alive and He dies not.” Then continuing his speech he recited the Qur’anic verse: “Muhammad is but a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. Will it be that, when he dieth or is slain, ye will turn back on your heels?” He who turneth back doth no hurt to Allah, and Allah will reward the thankful.”

All those persons who were present on the occasion later on stated on oath that when Abu Bakr recited the verse, it seemed as if it had just been revealed. ‘Umar says: “When I heard Abu Bakr reciting the verse, I was taken aback and fell down as if I did not have a leg to stand on. I felt as if I had then come to know of the prophet’s death.”¹

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO ABU BAKR

All Muslims then swear faithfulness to Abu Bakr, in the Hall of Banu Sa’ida², as the successor of God’s Messenger. The reason for making haste was due to old rivalries flaring up suddenly through machinations of the devil and selfishness of the faint-hearted hypocrites. Those who were sincere and well-meaning wanted to ensure that the Muslims remained united and strong under a leader, who could look after their affair and give a burial to the Messenger of God as his successor and head of the Muslim community.

BURIAL OF THE APOSTLE

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, pp. 655-56; for details see Bukhari, Chap. Mard-un-Nabi.

² Known as *Thaqifah Bani Sa’ida*, it was a thatched platform where the people of Medina usually met to discuss public affairs of the city.

Normalcy returned thereafter. The initial shock and grief gave way to tranquility and confidence and the Muslims again turned to the great task for which they had been trained and prepared for by the Apostle of God. The Apostle's family members washed and covered him, and stationed the bier in his house. On this occasion, Abu Bakr informed the people that the Apostle told him that every Prophet was buried on the spot where he dies. The Apostle's bedding was accordingly removed from the place and Abu Talha Ansari then dug a grave for him at the same spot.

Then the people came to pray their last respect to the Apostle and to say the funeral prayer in batches one after another. Women came in after the men followed by the children, all of whom prayed over him. Nobody acted as Imam (One who leads the prayer) in the prayers over the Apostle.¹

The day this came to pass was Tuesday.²

It was a sad day for Medina. When Bilal gave the call for morning prayer he could not help recalling the Apostle in the mirror of his mind and broke down in tears and sobs. His bewailing lacerated the hearts of all others who had been part of the living. But, it was quite different now, as everything seemed to be wearisome, gloomy.

Umm Salama says, "what a tormenting affliction it was! When we recall the distress we were in, every other trouble appears to be lighter and easier to endure."³

The Apostle had once said to the believers, "O ye people! If any one of you comes to grief, he ought to console himself in his bereavement by recalling to his mind the anguish that will rend his

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 663

² *Tabaqat Ibn Sa'ad*; *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, p. 517

³ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. pp. 538-39

heart on my death. For no sorrow would be greater to my followers than the agony caused to them by my death.”¹

After the people had completed the burial of the Apostle, Anas was asked by Fatima, “Anas, have your people found it easy to scatter the dust over God’s messenger?”²

¹ *Ibn Kathir* Vol. IV, p. 549

² *Bukhari, Mard-un-Nabi*

WIVES AND CHILDREN OF THE APOSTLE

The first among the wives of the Apostle was Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. The Prophet's marriage with Khadijah took place before the beginning of revelation when he was twenty-five and she forty years old. Being deeply devoted to the Apostle of God. She supported him during the most difficult period of his life, shared his advertise and troubles with a good grace and helped him with her wealth and kind words. She had died three years before the Apostle migrated to Medina. She had borne the Apostle all his children except Ibrahim. The Apostle always held her in high esteem and very often praised her. There was never an occasion that he had to kill a sheep and cut it into pieces and not send them to Khadijah's friends.¹

After the death of Khadijah, the Apostle married Sauda bint Zama'a. He was then united in wedlock with 'Aisha, whom he treasure and loved dearly. There has been no woman like her in the whole history of Islam who so deeply understood the teachings of Islam and convincingly explained the juristical issues; even the most eminent and learned companions of the Prophet consulted her on intricate legal issues. Hafsa, the daughter of 'Umar, was the next to join the nuptial tie with the holy Prophet. Thereafter, he married Zaynab bint Khuzaymah who died two months after her married to the Apostle. Umm Salama was then wedded by the Apostle and Hafsa was the last of his wives to leave this fleeting world. After her, the Apostle his aunt Umayma. Thereafter, Juwayriah bin Harith, belonging to the tribe of al-Mustaliq and Umm Habibah bint Abu Sufyan were, in succession, taken as wives by the Apostle. His next wife was safiyah, the daughter of the chief of Banu-nadir, Her father Huyayy B. Akhtab, traced his descent to Harun B. 'Imran, the brother of Prophet Musa. The honour of being the spouse of the Apostle went to Maymuna bint al-Harith of the tribe of Hilal.

¹ Bukhari, 'Aisha relates that she was jealous of Khadija although she had never seen her.

There is no difference of opinion that nine of the Prophet's wives survived him. Khadijah and Zaynab bin Khuwaymah had died during his lifetime. All of them, except 'Aisha, were widows.¹

The Apostle of God had also two bondswomen who were alive when he died. One of these was Mariyah the Copt, daughter of Sham'un, who had been presented to him by Muqauqis, the ruler of Egypt. She bore son, Ibrahim, to the Apostle. The other was Raihana bint Zayd who belonged to the tribe of An-Nadr.² She was set free on her profession of Islam and thereafter the Apostle took her in marriage.³

All wives of the Prophet being Umm-ul-Mu'minin⁴ (mothers of the faithful) to the Muslims, they were forbidden to remarry anyone after the death of the Apostle. This was in keeping with the honour and respect due to the Prophet as we as the loving regard every Muslim had for the Messenger of God. The writ of God for the Muslim was:

“And it is not for you to cause annoyance to the messenger of Allah, nor that ye should ever marry his wives after him. Lo! That Allah sight would be an enormity.” (Qur'an 33:53)

THE PROPHET'S MARRIAGES

Up to his twenty-fifth year the Apostle lived alone enjoying single blessedness. In the flower of his youth, he possessed all the qualities of the life's morning march: he was good-natured, sound of mind and body and an specimen of Arab manliness. His well-molded, strong built frame, courage, generosity, skill in horsemanship and unpretentiousness – the qualities esteemed by the Arabs – came of the wild, barren desert where he had spent his childhood. All these

¹ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 26-29

² According to some, she belonged to Banu Qurayza

³ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. IV, pp. 604-5

⁴ Qur'an 33:6

physical and mental gifts are, according to psychologist and scholar of ethics, no less important in molding the character of a man.

The youthful days of the Apostle, before the beginning of revelation, were free every blemish; neither his worst enemies during his lifetime nor the mud-slinging critics of the later times have ever been able to find the slightest fault with the critical period of his life. His veracity, chastity, innocence and pureness of heart were proverbial for he never indulged in anything unbecoming of a true-souled youth like him.

He married Khadijah at the age of twenty-five. She was a widow who had been twice married, and also children from her earlier husbands. As most of the authorities agree, she was fifteen years older than the Apostle of God. His next marriage was contracted with Sauda bin Zama'a when he had already crossed his fiftieth year. She had migrated to Abyssinia with her husband who had died there. The Prophet never married any virgin save 'Aisha – all his marriages were dedicated by consideration of kindness, cementing the bonds of friendship with the alien tribes, setting some example of virtuous behavior for the Muslims, achieving some public good for forestalling some danger to the nascent community of Islam.

In the tribal society of Arabia, family and matrimonial relationships had a special significance unknown to any other part of the world. Ties of blood lent security, importance and dignity in the tribal society of Arabia. The marriages of the Apostle were, thus, invariably conducive to the dissemination of the message of Islam among pagan tribes and thus they were a means of strengthening the idealistic society of Medina to the extent the ties of blood created through these marriages were helpful in putting a check to unnecessary bloodshed – the perpetual sport of the nomads – and both of these were absolutely necessary for the survival of Islamic society. Also, neither the Prophet nor his polygamous marriages. His was a life of exemplary continence and frugality, self-denial and temperance, a life so uniquely pure and chaste that not even

the greatest puritan of any time or clime can be compared with him. We shall cite some examples of his simple and frugal living while describing the Apostle's character and manners, but the testimony of God should be sufficient to convince every honest man about the absence of ease and comfort in the married life of the holy Prophet. "O Prophet! Say unto they wives: if they ye desire the world's life and its adornment, come! I will content you and will release you with fair release.

*"But if ye desire Allah and His messenger and the abode hereafter, then lo!
Allah hath prepared for the good among you in and immense reward."
(Qur'an 33:28-29)*

And said, "Lo! Do not make haste in giving your reply and consult your parents." She replied, "What is there to consult my parents? I want God and His Apostle and the abode of the Hereafter.¹ She relates that all the wives of the Prophet gave a similar reply.²

The Prophet's polygamous bonds of matrimony and the multifarious demands they entailed never cause him neglect, even for the shortest period of time, either the great responsibility of his mission or the affairs of the Muslims or even his own exacting religious and spiritual pursuits. They rather helped him to devote himself to his mission with a renewed vigour and enthusiasm. The wives of the Apostle always lent him a helping hand in the dissemination of his of his message and expounding the teachings of Islam of his followers. They accompanied him in his expeditions and nursed the sick and the wounded. In fact, about one-third of the teachings of Islam in regard to social, marital and household responsibilities of the Muslims has come to be known through the Apostle's wives who enlightened and guided the

¹ Bukhari, On the authority of 'Aisha

² Bukhari, On the authority of Ibn Hatim

Muslims about the family life and behaviour of the Prophet with the inmates of his house.¹

The great service rendered to Islam by the wives of the Apostle is best illustrated by 'Aisha about whom Adh-Dhahabi (d.748/1347), one of the most eminent scholars of the science of Traditions, write in the Tadhakkirat al-Huffaz.

*"Among the companions of the Prophet well-versed in jurisprudence she was the most prominent for even the leading juriconsults, referred intricate questions of law to her for advice. Qabisa bint Dhu'ayb says that 'Aisha knew more about law than most of the companions who used to make inquiries from her. Abu Musa says that if any companion of the Prophet amongst us had any difficulty in finding out the real purport of any Tradition, he used to enquire it from 'Aisha for she invariably knew about it. Hassan says that he found nobody more deeply versed than 'Aisha in the Qur'an, injunctions about the things permitted and forbidden or mandatory and obligatory, poetry, Arabian History and genealogy."*²

Moral Virtues of the Apostle's wives are indescribable; their clemency and benignity, grace and compassion, generosity and nobility, openhearted magnanimity are demonstrated by the incident handed down by Hisham on the authority of his father. He relates that "once Caliph Mu'awiyah sent one hundred thousand dirhams to 'Aisha and, by God, the month was not over when she had given it away to the poor and the needy." Thereupon a bondmaid said to her, "it would have been better if you had meat of a dirham." 'Aisha replied, "why didn't you tell me earlier?"³ it also related that 'Aisha was then keeping fast.⁴

¹ The significance and indispensability of polygamous marriages have been expounded by Qadi Sulaiman Mansurpuri in Vol. I of the *Rahmatul lil 'Alamin* (pp 141-144) and an Egyptian scholar 'Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad throws light on subject in the *abqariyat Muhammad*.

² *Tadhkkirat al Huffaz*, Vol. 1, p. 28

³ *Tadhkkirat al Huffaz*, Vol. 1, p. 28

⁴ *Ibid*. On the authority of Umm Dharah

The question relating to polygamous marriages allowed by Islam has long been preying on the minds of orientalists and Western writers. Their vexatiousness springs from their to hem in the matrimonial laws of Islam and the time-honoured practices of the Arabs countries within their own western concepts and usages. They are too often anxious to transpose their own standards – the product of peculiar circumstances in a particular type of society, lacking the sanction of divine authority – into a system growing out of the innate disposition and circumstances of Arabian society that carries not only social and moral benefits but also rest on the law of God. Truly speaking, it is a failing of the western way of thought and its protagonists that they present the Western concepts of morality as the standard of human behaviour and then ruthlessly proceed to set a value on everything that goes contrary to it. What they actually do is to raise a whimsical issue and then go ahead to find an answer to the problem. This is all due to their self-conceitedness and chauvinistic approbation of everything originating in the west.

A Western biographer of the Apostle has been told enough to pinpoint this common weakness of the occidentals who try to bring in a verdict on the marriages of the Prophet.

“Muhammad’s married life must not be looked at from an occidental point of view or from that set by Christian conventions. These men and women were not Occidentals and they were not Christian. They were living at a period and in country where the only known ethical standards were theirs. Even so, there is no reason why the codes of America and Europe should be considered superior to those of Arabs. The people of the West have many things to give to the people of the East. They much to glean, too, and until they can prove that their way of living is on a higher moral standard than anybody else’s, they should reserve judgment on other creeds and castes and countries.”¹

¹ R.V.C. Bodley, The messenger – The Life of Muhammad, London 1946, p. 203

The West condemns polygamy as an unmitigated evil and refuses, unwittingly, to attach any value to it, but, the so-called evil is neither unnatural nor abnormal, nor its condemnation is based on any universally accepted principle that it would continue to be rejected by the coming generations. The system envisages the role of men and women according to their nature while its rejection resting merely upon imaginary and fanciful scruples, derives support from powerful mass media possessed by the west. With the fast changing social, economic and moral pattern of the modern society the world will, in all probability, ultimately reject the Western values of monogamous marriages.

In one of the most challenging and appalling studies of the modern times, Alwin Toffler has analyzed the symptoms of terrifying changes emerging in the Western super-industrial society as a result of its present dehumanizing values. He has even predicted the as sexual attitudes of the West loosen up, as property rights become less important because of rising affluence, the social repression of polygamy may come to be regarded as irrational.¹

THE PROPHET'S CHILDREN

Khadijah, the first wife of the Apostle, gave birth to his son Al-Qasim, after whose name the Prophet was called Abul Qasim, that is, father of Qasim. He died in infancy. Thereafter she bore the Apostle four daughters, Zaynab, Ruqaiyah, Umm Khulthum and Fatimah. One more son named Abdullah was also born to her. 'Abdullah was surnamed as Tayyab and Tahir according to Ibn al-Qayyim, but there are others who regard the three as separate sons of the Prophet. All these sons and daughters of the Apostle were born to Khadijah.²

¹ Alwin Toffler, *Future Shock*, (Pan Books, Ltd. 1975) p. 228

² *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 25-26

Fatimah was held dearest by the Prophet amongst his children. The Apostle of God said about her: "She would be the leader of women in Paradise."¹ And "Fatimah is part me, and whose offends her offends me."² After the Prophet's death, she was the first among his family members to bid farewell to this world.

Mariyah the Copt was the mother of Ibrahim, another son of the Prophet. He also dies in infancy. In this deep sorrow over the child's death the Apostle of God said, "the eyes weep and the heart grieves, but we say nothing that displease our lord, and we are grieved over being separated from you, Ibrahim."³

There was solar eclipse on the day Ibrahim died. Some of the companions attributed the eclipse to Ibrahim's death. But the Apostle corrected them in a speech wherein he said, "the sun and the moon are two of the signs of God; they are not eclipsed on account of anyone's death."⁴

Zaynab was married to Abul 'As B. Rabi, a nephew of Khadijah, and had two children, a son named 'Ali and a daughter whose name was Umamah. Ruqaiyah, another daughter of the Apostle, was betrothed to Uthman who she bore a son named 'Abdullah. Ruqaiyah died while the Apostle was at Badr and 'Uthman was left behind to look after. Umm Khulthum, sister of Ruqaiyah, was then united in marriage with Uthman whence he came to be known as Dhum Nurayan, "The possessor of two lights."

Fatimah was joined in wedlock with 'Ali, the son of Abu Talib and a cousin of the Apostle. Their elder son was Hasan, by whose name 'Ali acquired the title of Abul Hasan and the younger one was Hussein. Both of them were dearest to the Prophet's hear and were praised by him in these words; "The two are my sweet-

¹ *Tirmidhi*, Vol. II, p. 421

² Bukhari and other authentic collections

³ Muslim, on the authority of Asma bint Yazid b. As-Salam

⁴ Muslim, *Kitab ul Kasauif*

smelling blossom in the world.¹ On another occasion he said about them, "These two would be the leaders of youth in Paradise."²

God blessed Hassan and Hussein with a progeny numerous as star in the firmament and caused them to serve Islam and its followers. Great leaders and scholars and heavenly-minded saints were born amongst them who raised the banner of revolt against every corruption and iniquity and restored the health of the soul to the Muslims. 'Ali and Fatimah had two more daughter, Zaynab and Umm Khulthum. The first was married to her cousin, Abdullah b J'afar, who was regarded as one of the most generous persons in Arabia. Zaynab bore two sons, 'Ali and 'Aun to 'Abdullah. Umm Khulthum was given in marriage to 'Umar B. al-Khattab whom he bore a son named Zayd.³

All the sons and daughters of the Apostle of God except Fatimah died during his lifetime. Fatimah yielded her breath six months after the demise of the Prophet.⁴

¹ Bukhari, *Kitab ul Manaqib*

² *Tirmidhi*, Vol. II, p. 221

³ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. IV, pp. 581-82

⁴ *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 26

CHARACTER AND FEATURES

A comprehensive and graceful account of the noble qualities, merciful disposition and distinctive traits of the Prophet's character has been left by Hind B. Abi hala¹ He says:

“Being care-laden with the anxiety of after-life, the Prophet would remain engrossed in the thought of hereafter continually for long spell, and seemed to be endlessly perturbed by it. Often he would remain long silent and never spoke needlessly. When he spoke, he enunciated each syllable distinctly, and thus he would also end his speech. Whatever he said, it was never long-winded nor unnecessarily concise. He was kindhearted and soft-spoken, never harsh or cool in his behaviour. Neither he humiliated anyone nor he liked to be treated with disrespect. The Prophet set much by every provision; even if it was small in quantity he never deprecated it. As for the edibles he never disapproved nor praised; nor he showed anger about anything of the world or what it stand for. However, whenever one failed to meet one's obligation to God, nothing could cool down his indignation until he had paid back in full measure. But, for the wrongs done to his own person, he would never become angry.

“When he pointed out something, he did so with his whole hand; and when he was astonished he turned his hand over, in speaking with another, he would strike the palm of the left on the thump of his right hand. Angry, he would avert his face; joyful, he would look downwards. His laughter was but a smile, and when he laughed, his teeth used to appear white as hailstone.”

‘Ali was one of those who were nearest to the Apostle; a member of his family who had the opportunity of knowing all about him; and, he was also a keen observer of the manner and morals men. In addition, ‘Ali had also the gift of describing a thing or character in its vividness and intensity. He says about the holy Prophet.

¹ Son of Khadija by her former husband and maternal uncle of Hasan.

“He was predisposed to refrain from unseemly language, curse and reviling and deeds shameful; in no wise he said or did anything improper; he never raised his voice in market place, nor returned evil for evil, rather, he was given to forgive and forget. Never in his life he laid his hands on anyone save in a fight for the sake of God, nor did he ever strike anybody with his hand, neither a servant nor woman. I never saw him exacting retribution for any offence or excess excepting when the honour of God was concerned or the limit set by Him was transgressed, in which case the Prophet would be more enraged than anybody else. If he had the choice between two courses, he would choose the easier one. When he came to his house, he behaved like a commoner, cleaned his garments, milked the sheep and performed the household chores.

“The Messenger of God was not given to idle talk; he spoke only when he was concerned and comforted the people instead of giving them a scare through his speech. If a man of rank or nobility called upon him from another tribe, he showed him due honour and appointed him to some respectable post. He was over careful in forming his estimate about them, although he never denied anyone his courtesy and sweet temper. He kept his companions always posted with the events and happening and used to ask them affairs.

“He commended what was good and deprecated what was bad or vile; strengthened the one and weakened the other; was always moderate and steadfast without going back and forth; never allowed anything to escape his attention lest others should become negligent or get distracted; took care to possess the means for meeting every contingency; and was never found wanting in doing what was right and proper but in no wise he never exceeded the limits. Those who kept his company were all virtues and the elect; he was the best in his estimation that was the most benignant and courteous to all; and he was the most esteemed in his eyes that excelled others in benevolence kindness and in doing a favour to others. The Prophet would stand up with the name of God on his lips and so he sat down. Wherever he went, he sat down in the rear and instructed others to do the same. He paid such attention to everyone attending his meetings that everybody thought that none attracted his notice like himself. If anybody asked him to sit down or spoke

of his affair, the Apostle listened to him patiently and gave heed to him until he had finish his talk and departed. If any body asked for something or wanted his help, he never allowed him to leave without disposing of his business or at least comforted him with words kind and sweet. Such was his grace and kindness to one and all that everybody took him as his father. In regard to what right and proper he regarded all on the same plane. His were the gatherings of knowledge and edification, of seemliness and modesty, of earnestness and probity. Neither anybody talked in a loud voice, nor censured others; nor cast a reflection on anybody, nor found fault with others; all were equal on even ground, and only those enjoyed a privilege who were more pious and God fearing. In his meetings, the elders were held in reverence, the youngers were treated kindly, those in need were given preference by all and the wayfarers and strangers were afforded protection and looked after," further he says:

"Of cheerful disposition, the Apostle of God was always bright and radiant; he was tenderhearted¹ and sweet tempered; not stern by nature, he never spoke harshly; nor was he accustomed to speaking loudly; nor to saying anything unseemly or lewd; nor yet he found fault with others; he was not stingy or miser; if he disliked the request made to him, he simply ignored it and instead of refusing it outright he gave no reply. From the three things he always kept aloof; one was squabble, the other, arrogance, and the third, dabbling in a futile task. And, the three things he spared others were that he never spoke ill of anyone, nor maligned anybody, nor pried into anyone's failings. He gave tongue only to the things which were decent. When he spoke all those present to him attentively lowering their heads as if birds were sitting on their heads.² Others spoke only when the Apostle had finished his talk; nobody joined issue with others in his presence and when anybody said something others kept quiet until he had finished his talk. The Prophet of God used to smile on the remarks which made others laugh and expressed surprise over things, which astonished others. He always gave heed to the wayfarers and used to put up patiently with the rudeness of strangers until

¹ It is related that the Apostle was bighearted, benign and accommodative and forgave the fault of others. He never kicked up a row with anybody while others report that he was always calm and composed.

² The people listened with such rapt attention and without making a stir as if bird sitting on their heads would fly away if they made any movement.

his companions diverted the attention of such persons. He used to say: 'Help those whom you find in need.' He gave ears only to such tributes as were modestly warded and never interrupted nor cut in the talk of others. If anybody exceeded the limits, he either forbade him or got up to cut short such prattle.

"He was the most generous, large hearted, truthful, clement, lenient and amiable. One who saw him for the first time was overawed, but when one kept his company and came to know him intimately, one became attached to him like an inseparable companion. Those who had seen him say that they never saw a man like him either before or after him- May God have peace and blessing on his Apostle,"¹

God had endowed his Prophet with an impressive personality. His features displayed a harmonious blending of a lovely elegance and grace sublime splendor and impressiveness. Says Hind B. Abi Hala, "he was self-respecting, graceful, and splendid-- pleasing to the eyes set on him. His face had the brilliance of a full moon."²

Bara' B. 'Azib relates, "God's Messenger was of medium height. I had seen him once wearing a red robe and never seen anyone more beautiful than he."³ Abu Huraira says: The Prophet was of a moderate size, a bit tall than short, his complexion was very fair, his beard was black, the mouth was of moderate size and pretty, the eye-lashes were long, the shoulders were broad-- I have never seen a man like him either before or after him."⁴ Anas reports, "I have not touched any brocade or silk which was softer than the palm of God's Messenger, nor smelt anything sweeter than the Prophet Odour."⁵

Love of God

The holy Prophet was the Messenger of God, the chosen and the exalted, whose All sins, foregoing and coming, had been forgiven by

¹ *Shama'il Tirmidhi*

² *Shama'il Tirmidhi*, Hasan on the authority of Hind b. Abi Hala

³ An accepted Tradition of the Sahi Sillah

⁴ *Al-Adab al-Mufrad lil Bukhari*

⁵ Bukhari

the Lord, yet was the most painstaking, eager and earnest in paying homage to God.

Al-Mughira B. Sh'uba reported that the Prophet once got up at night and stood praying for such a long time that his feet became swollen. On being asked why he did this when all of his former and later sins had been forgiven," what! Should I not be a grateful servant (of God),"¹

'Aisha relates that the Apostle of God once kept awake throughout the night till morning reciting only one verse. Reporting the same event Abu Dharr says that the Prophet kept praying throughout the night reciting once verse until the dawn appeared. The verse he recited was:

"If Thou punish them, Lo! They are thy slaves, and if Thou forgive them, lo! Thou, only Thou art the Mighty, the wise." (Qur'an 5:118)

Aisha says, "The Apostle of God took to fast to such an extent that we thought he would never give it up, and when he would go without fasting we thought that perhaps he would never fast again."² Anas reports that whoever wanted to see the Prophet praying at night could do so and similarly one could see him sleeping.

'Abdullah B. ash-Shikhkhir says that once he went to see the Prophet. He was then offering prayers and sobbing – the sound emitting from his chest was like that of a boiling pot.³

The Apostle was never at ease except when he performed the prayers. It seemed that even after saying his prayers, he eagerly look forward to the time when he would again be paying homage to God. The Apostle often remarked: "the comfort of my eyes lies in prayers."

¹ Bukhari has mentioned this Tradition in his commentary on *Surah al-Fath* while *Tirmidhi* and *Nasa'I* narrate it in connexion with the nightly vigils of the Prophet.

² *Nasa'I and Ibn Majah*

³ *Shama'il Tirmidhi*

The companions of the Prophet relate that whenever he had any trouble he used to prostrate in supplication.”

*“Whenever the wind blew at night”, says Abu Darda, “the Apostle of God took shelter in the in the mosque until it became calm. And whenever there solar or lunar eclipse, the Prophet got up in trepidation seeking refuge from God until it was over and the sky was clear. The Apostle always seemed solicitous to commune with God; uneasy and restless until he had gain fallen prone before the Lord. Oftentimes he sent for Bilal and said, ‘Bilal make arrangements for holding prayers and put me at ease.’”*¹

INDIFFERENCE TO THE WORLD

Not the best words in their best order in any language can adequately depict the way God’s Messenger looked at Dirham and Dinar, wealth and property and the world and all that it stands for. Indeed, even the disciples who had served their time at the feet of the Apostle’s companions or the disciples of such disciple never regarded fortunes and treasures fit enough for the dust hole. Their pure and pious lives, their indifference to wealth and worldly possession, the way they showered bounty on one and all and preferred others over their own selves, their contentedness with the barest minimum and their heroic selflessness and self-denial take one’s breath away.² One can only picture to oneself the nobleness of heart and openhanded generosity as well as self-abnegation the minds of all the later godly souls.

We shall, therefore, cite here only a few of those authentic reports which have been handed down by the most trust-worthy narrators since the Prophet’s own words and action can best illustrate his outlook and sentiments in this regard.

¹ *Abu Dawud*

² For a detailed study of the lives of these God-moved souls see the *Az-Zuhd* by 'Abdullah b. Mubarak, the *Sifat us-Safwah* by Ibn al-Jawzi and the *Hilyatul Auliya'* by Abu Nua'ym.

Two of the well-known sayings of the Apostle of God which sum up his attitude towards worldly life are: “O God, life is truly the life of hereafter”, and “What have I do to with world! My only business with it is like that of a rider who shades himself under a tree, then goes off and leaves it.”¹

‘Umar once saw the Apostle lying on a reed mat which had left its mark on his body. ‘Umar gave way to tears at the frugal living and privation of his mentor.’ The Prophet asked “what the matter ‘Umar?” he replied, “O Messenger of God, of all the creatures of God, you are the most venerated, but it is the Caesar and the chosroes who are rolling in the lap of luxury.” ‘Umar reply made the Apostle’s blood boil in anger and his face become red. He said, “‘Umar, have you any doubt about it?” the he added, “These are the men who have been given all the pleasures of life in advance her in this world.”²

the life of ease was rejected by God’s Messenger not only for his own self but also for his dependents as well. He was heard praying, “O God, make the provision of Muhammad’s family sufficient only to sustain life.”³ Abu Huraira says, “By Him in whose hand is Abu Huraira’s life, the Apostle of God and his family never had the wheat bread continuously for three days until he departed from this world.”⁴

‘Aisha relates, “We, the members of the Prophet’s household caught sight of one moon and then the next, but no fire was lighted in our hearth. We had to live only dates and waters.”⁵

The Prophet’s coat of mail had been pawned with a Jew but he had not enough money to get rid back from him. The messenger

¹ *Abu Dawud*

² See *Sahihayn* for the full report

³ *Bukhari, Kitab ur-Ruqaq; Muslim, Kitab uz-Zuhd*

⁴ *Bukhari, Muslim*

⁵ *Ibid*

of God departed from the world when the coat of mail was still with the Jew.

The Prophet proceeded to perform the Farewell Pilgrimage followed by a huge crowd which obscured the horizon at a time when the entire Arabian Peninsula had acknowledged his spiritual and temporal supremacy. Yet, the saddle of his dromedary was outworn covered by a sheet, which was worth not more than four dirhams. The prayer he then sent up to God was, "O Allah, make it Hajj devoid of all pretensions and show."¹

Abu Dhar reports the Apostle telling him on an occasion, "I would hate to possess as much gold as Mount Uhud and then to allow three days to pass with a single Dinar remaining with me except that which I may hold back for the cause of religion; rather, I would give it away to God's servants this way and that, on my right and left and in the back."²

Jabir B. 'Abdullah says that it never happened that the God's Messenger was requested to give anything and he said 'No' in reply. Ibn 'Abbas testifies that in generosity and bountifulness the Apostle of God was swifter than the wings of the wind.³

Anas says that once when a man asked the Apostle to give him something he gave him a flock of sheep enough to fill the space between two hill cocks. The man returned to his people and said to them, "O ye people, embrace Islam. Muhammad (peace be upon him) gives so open-handedly as if he fears not poverty." Another time, ninety thousand dirhams were presented to the Prophet. He asked to heap them up on a mat and then started giving it away. Nobody who asked for it was denied until the entire heap money disappeared.

¹ *Tirmidhi*

² Bukhari and Muslim. The version narrated in the *Sahih Bukhari* reads, "I would disdain to possess as much gold as Uhud."

³ See the full version in the *Sahihain*.

NATURAL DISPOSITION

The holy Prophet had an excessive zeal for devotions to God, his uninterrupted communion with the Lord took the shape of extensive orisons and vigils, supplications and lamentations and his indifference to the world surpassed the abstinence of hermits and ascetics but he was never wanting in sympathy and compassion, courteous and mannerly behavior to one and all; nor was he ever lacking in restoring justice to one whom it was denied or in bidding welcome to everyone according to his status and position. According to the wont of human nature, these were perhaps the strongest un-identical traits blended together in the character of the Prophet. Once he said to Anas, "If you had known what I know, you would have laughed ever so little and wept a great deal."¹

The Apostle came of the noblest stock, yet he was very modest, exceedingly large hearted and most sweet tempered; he never kept aloof from his companions; cherished a kind and tender disposition towards the children and often took them in his lap; accepted the invitation to take meals with the slaves and maidservants, the poor and the indigent; visited the sick even if he had to go to the farthest corner of the city and always accepted the excuses offered for misdeeds.² he was never seen stretching his legs whilst sitting with his companions lest anyone of them should feel inconvenience.

‘Abdullah B. al-Harith reports that he had not seen anyone smiling so often and with a more cheerful disposition than the Apostle of God.³ Jabir B. Samurah says that he had joined the sittings of the Apostle and his companions more than a hundred times. He saw the companions listening and reciting poems, describing some incident of the pagan past while the Apostle of God either sat silently or smiled with them at some amusing remark. Shared state

¹ *Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat ul-Auliya.*

² *Shama'il Tirmidhi*

³ *Ibid*

that the Prophet asked him to recite the verse of Umayyad B. Abi As-Salt and he recited them.¹

The Apostle was extremely kindhearted and affectionate – the finest human sentiments and virtues were discernible in his character. Anas B. Malik heard God's Apostle saying to Fatimah, "Bring my two sons."² in a moment they came running and the Prophet kissed and embraced them.³ Another time the Prophet summoned his grandson, Hassan B. 'Ali. He came running and falling in the Prophet's lap, passed his fingers through his beard. The Prophet opened his mouth while Hasan's saliva fell in his mouth.⁴

Fatimah tells that when the Prophet's freedman Zayd B. Haritha came to medina, the Prophet was in his house. Zayd knocked at the door. The Prophet immediately got up to greet him although he was not properly dressed. His mantle hanging loosely on his shoulders, he went to receive Zayd, shook hands with him and kissed him.

Usama B. Zayd reports that one of the Prophet's daughters sent him a message telling that a son of hers was at the ebb of life, asking him to come to her. The Prophet send her greetings, saying at the same time, "What God has take away belong to Him and what He has given belongs to Him, and He has appointed a time for everyone; so she ought to show endurance and seek her reward from God." She then sent for him adjuring to come her, and he got up to go accompanied by us. The boy who was t the last gasp was brought to the Prophet who took him in his lap, his eyes overflowing with tears. Sa'd asked, "What is this O Messenger of God?" He replied, "This is compassion which God deposits in the

¹ *Al-Adab al-Mufrad lil Bukhari*, p. 127. Umayya b. Abi as-Salt was a preIslamic poet whose verses are chiefly on religious topics. He was a monotheist contemporary with the Prophet.

² Hasan and Husain

³ *Tirmidhi*, Merits of Hasan and Husain.

⁴ *Al-Adab al-Mufrad lil Bukhari*, p. 173.

hearts of His servants whom He will. Verily, God shows compassion to those who are compassionate.”

When the prisoners taken in the battle of Badr including ‘Abbas were tied, the Apostle could not sleep because of the groaning of ‘Abbas. The Ansar, on coming to know the Prophet’s uneasiness, untied him. The Prophet was pleased with the Ansar but when it was suggested to him that ‘Abbas should be set free on payment of an indemnity, he refused the request since he did not like to discriminate between ‘Abbas and other prisoners.¹

A Bedouin came to the Apostle and said, “You kiss your children but we do not.” The Apostle replied, “What can I do if God has withdrawn compassion from your hearts.”²

The Prophet was extremely kind to the children and was always considerate and benevolent to them. Anas says that God’s Messenger passed by some children who were playing. The Prophet greeted them. He also reports that the Prophet used to mingle with us and ask my younger brother, “Abu ‘Umayr, what has happened to your bird?”³

Being too solicitous and well disposed to the Muslims, the Messenger of God was very tolerant and overlooked their occasional weariness boredom.

‘Abdullah B. Mas’ud says that the Prophet used to interlace his exhortations and counsels to the people lest they should not get tired with them. Although prayer was most pleasing to him, he always used to cut it short if the cry of any child reached his ears. He said once, “When I stand up for prayers I intend to make it long, but when I hear any child crying shorten it for fear that his mother might be distressed.”⁴

¹ *Fath ul-Bari*, Vol. VIII, p. 324

² Bukhari, On the authority of ‘Aisha

³ *Al Adab al-Mufrad*, p. 40

⁴ Bukhari, *Kitab us-Salat*

Abu Mas'ud narrates that someone said to the Prophet, "O Messenger of God, I swear by Allah that I keep away from the morning prayer on account of so and so who makes it too long." Ibn Mas'ud further says that he never saw the Apostle more angry than he saw him while giving an exhortation after that incident. He said, "there are some among you who scare the people away; so whoever of you leads a prayer, he ought to be brief, for there are the weak and the aged and those who have a business to attend."

It is also related that Natasha was a singer of camel-songs who had a beautiful voice and used to lead the dromedaries of women. Natasha's melodious singing made the camels go quickly which disturbed the women. Hence the Prophet said to him, "Gently, Anjasha, do not break the glass vessels."¹

God had made the Apostle's heart as clear as a crystal, bearing no ill will against anybody. Once he said to his companions, "None of you should denounce another before me, for I like to come out to you without ill-feeling."²

God's Messenger was benign and gracious to all the Muslim like their father, He treated everyone of them like his family member as if they were his own charge. Or, the affection he had for them was like that of a mother for her child, for he had never an eye to their wealth and property or their prosperity but he always deemed it his duty lighten their burdens and to clear their debts. He used to say, "Whoever leaves some property as legacy, it belongs to his heirs, but his unpaid debts are my responsibility."³

There is yet another report citing the Apostle: "No Muslim has a patron closer unto him than I; or, if you wish, recite the verse:"⁴ The

¹ Al-Adab al-Mufrad, p. 185, Bukhari and Muslim. The Prophet indicated, figuratively, the weakness and delicacy of women who were put to trouble by the faster pace of the camels.

² *Kitab us-Shifa*, p. 55

³ Bukhari, *Kitab ul Istegrad*

⁴ Qur'an 33:6

Prophet is closer to the believers than their selves; for the property left by anyone goes to his nearest kins whoever they may be; but if one dies leaving a debt, he (the creditor) should come to me since I am the patron of the deceased and responsible to discharge his debts.”¹

MODERATION AND SEEMLINESS

The cardinal virtues of the Prophet, the niceness and seemliness of his character, which would remain a shining example of decorous behaviour for the coming generations, present as well as future, consisted of his innate moderation, refined taste and gracefulness, restraint and temperateness and unexcessiveness which always kept him on the middle path. ‘Aisha relates that the God’s Messenger was never given his choice between two things without taking the easier course provided it involved no sin; for, no one kept farther away from it than he.²

The Prophet disliked pretension and airiness no less than he detested asceticism, self-mortification and renouncement of what was the just claim of one’s body and soul.

Abu Huraira reported the Apostle as saying, “The religion is facility, but if anyone overdoes it, it wears him down; so take to moderation and steer an even course; approximate yourselves to handiness and be cheering, and get strength through prayer in the morning, the evening, and some of the part of darkly night.”

The Prophet also advised, “Lo! Exert only as much as you have strength, for, by God, Allah would never get tired but you would grow weary.” Ibn ‘Abbas relates that the Apostle of God was asked about the religion most liked by God. He replied. “The religion of ease and sincerity.”³

¹ Bukhari

² Muslim

³ *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, p. 181

‘Abdallah B. Masud reported God’s Messenger as saying, ‘They are doomed who over do or deal sternly or are given to hair-splitting.’”¹

The companions sent by the Apostle for the education of or exhortation to any tribe were commanded by him: “make it easy, not heard, gladden the hearts, don’t scare them away.” ‘Abdullah B. ‘Amar B. al-As tells that the Prophet said, “God likes to see the marks of His bounty on His servant.”²

THE PROPHET IN HIS HOUSE

The Apostle of God occupied himself at his home like a common man. As Aisha relates, he used to clean his clothes, milk the sheep and himself do his odd jobs. She also says that he would mend his clothes, repair his shoes and do similar other works. When asked how the Prophet occupied himself at home, she replied. “He used to keep himself busy in household chores and went out when the time for prayer came.”³

In another report related on her authority, she is reported to have said, “The Prophet of God used to repair his shoes, mend his clothes and occupied himself at home even as any of you occupy yourself.”⁴

‘Aisha relates, “God’s Messenger was very softhearted, the kindest of All. He laughed often and smiled much.”⁵ Anas say that he had not seen a man who was more clement and nice to his household members than the Apostle of God.”⁶ It related on the authority of Aisha ‘Aisha that the Prophet said, “the best of you in

¹ Muslim

² *Tirmidhi, Abwab al-Adab.*

³ Bukhari

⁴ *Musannaf by Abd al-Razzaq, Vol. XI, p. 260*

⁵ Ibn ‘Asakir

⁶ Musnad Ahmad and Muslim, on the authority of Anas

one how is most nice to his wife and children and I am nicest among you.”¹

Abu Huraira said that the Prophet never expressed disapproval of any food, if he desired he ate it, and if he disliked he left it alone.”²

SELFLESSNESS

It was settled principle with the Prophet that he was always kept to the fore his own kith and kin and those who were nearer to him facing a risk or hazard but allotted them the last place in distributing favours and rewards and spoils of war. When the three well-known swordsmen of Quraish, ‘Utba B. Rabia, Shayba B. Rabia and Walid B. Utba, challenged the Muslims to single combat at Badr, the Prophet sent forward Hamza, ‘Ali and ‘Ubayda although he knew about the valour of enemy combatants and also had number of veterans among the Muhajirin and the Ansar who could have successfully titled with the Quraishite battlers. All the three, Hamza, ‘Ali and ‘Ubayda, belonged to the Prophet’s own clan, Banu Hashim, and were his nearest relatives. They were also held dear by him but the Apostle disliked to imperil others for the sake of keeping his kindred out of danger. God helped the three to emerge successful in the combat; Hamza and ‘Ali came back safe and triumphant while ‘Ubayda was brought back mortally wounded.

Again, when the Prophet disallowed usury and abolished blood vengeance belonging to the Pre-Islamic period on the occasion of Farewell pilgrimage he declared, “The usury of the pre-Islamic period is abolished, and the first of our usury I abolish is that of ‘Abbas B. ‘Abdul Muttalib. Claims of blood vengeance belonging to the pagan past have been abolished and the first of those

¹ Ibn Majah

² Bukhari and Muslim

murdered among us whose blood vengeance I remit is that of the son of Rabi'a B. al-Harith.¹

Unlike the kings, rulers and political leaders the Prophet of God always kept his kin and kindred in the background, giving preference to others in giving out gifts and rewards. 'Ali relates that Fatimah had to work hard in grinding corn. So, when she got the news that some slave girls had been brought to the Prophet, she went to him and requested him or one to be given to her. The Prophet, however, did not accede to her request. Fatimah then mentioned the matter to 'Aisha who talked to the Prophet about Fatimah's trouble. Relating this incident 'Ali says: "The Apostle of God visited us when we had gone to bed. We were about to get up but he told us to stay where we were. He then sat down near me and I felt the coldness of his feet on my chest. He then said, 'Let me guide you to something better than what you have asked. When you go to bed, say Subhan Allah (Glory be to God) thirty-three times, Alhamdu-dulillah- (Praise be to God) Thirty three times, and Allah-o-Akbar (God is most great) thirty-three times. This will be better for you than a servant.'"²

In another report of the same incident handed down through another source, the Prophet is also reported to have said, "By God, I cannot give you anything at the time when the bellies of my companions of Suffa³ have been hollowed by hunger. I have nothing to meet their expenses and I will sell these to provide for them."⁴

INSTINCTIVE SUBLIMENESS

¹ *Muslim, Kitab ul-Haj* on the authority of Jabir b. 'Abdullah.

² Bukhari, *Kitab ul-Jihad*

³ A raised platform at the mosque in Medina where lived poor companions desirous of remaining in attendance upon the Prophet.

⁴ *Fath-ul-Bari*, Vol. VII, pp. 23-24 (On the authority of Ahmad).

Great was the responsibility lying on the Apostle; publication of God's truth in its purity, inviting the people to betake the path of truth and virtue, guarding and guiding the nascent Islamic community and the cares and anxieties for the suffering humanity were the charges heavier than flesh and blood can bear. It between all these worries, stresses and strains we find the most sublime instincts of grace and goodness reflecting his worthiness and excellence of heart. In spite of his dauntless spirit of resolution and singleness of purpose which have always been the distinguishing features of the prophets, the Apostle of God could never forget those faithful friends and companions who had accepted his mission in its initial stages and made the supreme sacrifice of laying down their lives in the battle of Uhud. He always used to talk about them, invoked divine blessings for them and not an often paid a visit to them.

Such was this immortal love, with an element of the transcendent in it, that it had gone beyond the flesh and blood and penetrated the inanimate hills and stones and ravines where these brilliant spectacles of noble love and sacrifice have been enacted. His companions relate that they heard him saying, "This is the hill that loves me and I love it."¹ Abi Humayd reports that he accompanied the Apostle while returning from Tabuk. When they came near Madina, the Prophet of God said, "This is Taba² and this the hill which loves me and I love it."³

'Uqba tells that God's Messenger went to the martyrs of the Uhud and prayed for their salvation. Jabir B. Abdullah relates that when the martyrs of the Uhud were once mentioned to the Prophet he said, "I swear to God that I would have liked to be sleeping with these martyrs by the side of this hill."

The Apostle had borne with equanimity the shock of Hamza's death, which had been his loving uncle as well as foster brother and had parted with his life fighting valiantly for the cause of

¹ Bukhari, *Kitab ul Maghazi*

² *Medina Tayyaba*

³ Bukhari, *Kitab ul Maghazi*

Islam. He had also remained calm and composed on what had been done with Hamza's dead body. But when he passed by the houses of Bani Abdul Ashhal while returning to Madina, he heard the lamentations over dead. Overcome with the grief for the departed comrade, his eyes gave way to tears and he said, "but there are no women to mourn over Hamza!"¹

But these instincts and emotions, howsoever noble and sublime and overflowing with the milk of human kindness, were never allowed by the Apostle of God to entrap his mission or to disrupt the divine injunctions. Historians and biographers of the Prophet relate that when Said B. Muadh and Usayd B. Hudayr came back to the settlement of Bani Abdul Ashhal, they ordered their women to gird themselves and go and weep for Hamza. They did as they had been told and when the Apostle came he found them weeping at the door of his mosque. But he told them, "May God have mercy on you, go back; your presence has been enough for my consolation." It has been narrated by another companion that on seeing the women the Apostle asked, "What is it?" When he was told that the Ansar had sent their women to weep over Hamza, he invoked God's mercy for the Ansar and paid compliments to them for their love to him but also added, "I did not mean that. I do not like lamentation over dead. Thereafter the Apostle forbade mourning for the dead."²

An occasion still more poignant it was when Wahshi, the slayer of Hamza, called upon the Apostle of God, the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims was deemed by the enemies of Islam as the darkest hour of their lives. A number of them had no hesitation in reaching the decision that it would now be well-nigh impossible for them to remain at Mecca: they decided to migrate to Syria, Yemen or some other place for the fear of their lives. Their friends, however, told them: "Woe to you, Muhammad (peace be upon him) does not kill anyone who enters his religion." Almost

¹ *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, p. 95. Ahmad has narrated this report on the authority of Ibn 'Umar.

² *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. III, p. 96

all these former enemies returned and embraced Islam. None of them had the least speck of fear in his heart on appearing before the Apostle after pledging allegiance to Islam, nor did the Apostle say a word to cast any doubt on their sincerity or to terrify them. And so it happened with Washshi also. The Apostle of God learnt from Washshi, after he had accepted Islam, how he had killed Hamza. It was but natural that the Prophet was grieved and harrowed to know about the ghastly crime of Washshi, but he did not allow his irritation to get better of his responsibility as the Apostle of God. He neither refused to admit Washshi to the fold of Islam nor had him slain for his crime. All he said to Washshi was, "O man, hide your face from me and never let me see you again." Washshi used to avoid the Apostle of God so that he should not see him, until the time arrived for the Apostle's departure.¹

These nobler emotions or tender feelings reflecting warm-heartedness of the Prophet were laid bare when he visited an old, dilapidated grave. Then, those with him found him in turmoil, and he said, "This is the grave of Amina." This was long, long years after the death of the Apostle's mother.²

MIDLENESS, COURTESY AND FORBEARANCE

In his good manners, gentleness, cordiality, sympathy and forbearance the messenger of God has left a perpetual and living example of noble behavior for the entire humanity. To tell the truth, he stood on such an exalted plane of graceful and polite deportment that has paid him glowing compliment in the Qur'an.

"And verily thou art of a high and noble disposition." (Qur'an 68:4)

¹ *Ibn Hisham*, Vol. II, p. 72, *Bukhari*, *Kitab ul-Maghazi*.

² *Baihaqi*, On the authority of Sufyan Thauri; *Ibn Kathir*, Vol. I, p. 236.

The Apostle once told the companions, “god has Himself disciplined me and disciplined in the best manner.”

Jabir reported the Apostle as saying; “God has raised me for the completion of moral virtues and seemly behavior.”¹

When Aisha was questioned about the character of the Prophet, she replied, “Qur’an was his character.”²

Indeed, such were his tolerance and forbearance, sympathy, graciousness and large heartedness that even the painters of soul with gift of speech would seldom find words adequate to catch his likeness. Had the accounts about him not been handed down with the greatest caution by the most trustworthy narrators, it would have been difficult for one to accept them. But all these accounts have been transmitted through different sources and channels so corroborate one another that in their genuineness and authenticity they form a class by themselves in the entire continuous and methodical records of public events. There is, thus, not the least doubt that every unbiased student of these records will come to the conclusion that never has there existed a history document, which was more firmly based on facts or better authenticated by external and internal evidence than the Traditions of the Prophet, which represent the climax of the science of history.

A few incidents given here illustrate the Prophet’s tenderness and mercy towards the people.

Clemency of the merciful Apostle of God made no distinction between a friend and a foe. ‘Abdullah B. Ubayy was the leader of hypocrites whose revengeful attitude had always created difficulties for the Prophet. But, when he died and he had been placed in his grave, the Apostle of God arrived and asked him to be taken out. He then place him on his knees, blew some of his saliva over him, and cloth him with his shirt.³

¹ *Sharh-us-Sunnah and Mishkat-ul-Masazh*, p. 514.

² Muslim

³ ‘Abdullah b. Ubayy died in 9 A. H., after his return from *Tabuk*. *Ar-Zurqani*, Vol. III, pp. 112-13; Bukhari.

Anas report: "Once when I was walking with the Prophet who was wearing a Najrani cloak with a coarse fringe, a nomadic Arab met him and gave his cloak a violet tug. I saw that the man's tug had left a mark on the neck of God's Apostle. The nomad said, "Command that I be given some of the God's property you have, Muhammad (peace be upon him)." The Apostle turned around to him and laughed, and then ordered that he should be given something."¹

Zayd B. S'ana came to the Prophet and demanded payment of the money owned by the Prophet. Then he violently pulled the Prophet's cloak from his shoulder, caught hold of it and addressed him rudely, saying, "You son of Abdul Muttalib are dilly-dallying." Umar rebuked and reproached him but Prophet kept smiling and said to Umar, "This man was entitled to a better treatment from, you ought to have advised me to repay the loan promptly and asked him to make his demand politely." Then, turning to Zayd, the Prophet said, "There are still three days to go for the appointed time for repayment." At the same time he asked Umar to repay the loan and give Zayd twenty S'as more so as to compensate him for his threatening attitude towards Zayd. The gracious and obliging behavior of the God's Apostle caused Zayd to embrace Islam.²

Anas relates that once a band of eighty armed men of Mecca suddenly appeared at Wadi Tan'yeem with the intention of making a sudden attack on the Apostle spared their lives.³

Relating an incident when Jabir went with the Apostle of God on an expedition, he says, "at mid-day the time for siesta came during the journey. The valley was full of thorny bushes. The Apostle of God went to take rest under a acacia tree on which he hung his sword. We also dispersed to take a break under different trees. All of a sudden the Prophet called us and we saw that a nomadic Arab was sitting by his side. When we went to him said, 'I was sleeping

¹ Bukhari, *Kitab-ul-Jihad*, Musnad Ahmad, Vol. III, p. 153.

² Ahmad, Vol. III, p. 153

³ Muslim, *Kitab ul-Jihad*

when this man came and unsheathed my sword against me, and he was asking me: ‘Who can now protect you from me?’ I replied, ‘Allah’, and he sheathed the sword. Then he sat down and now he is before you.” it is related that God’s Apostle did not exact any vengeance from the nomad.¹

Every companion of the Prophet was sufficient forbearing to throw the most godly soul into shade but the long-suffering patience of God’s Messenger rose above the patience of all of them. He was their kindhearted teacher and mentor and guide from whom all drew inspiration. An incident related by Abu Huraira illustrated the breadth and bigness of the Apostle’s heart. Once a Bedouin passed urine in the holy Mosque. The companions jumped at him and grabbed, “Let him alone. Pour a bucket or two of water over what he has passed, for you have been sent to make things easy and not make things difficult.”²

Another companion, Mu’awiyah B. Al-Hakam reports, “I sneezed while praying along with the Apostle of God and said: ‘God have mercy on you!’ The people around stared down at me, so I said, ‘Woe is me! What do you mean by looking askance at me?’ they began to strike their hands on their thighs. Now I understood that they wanted me to silent and I kept quite. When the Apostle of God finished his prayer – for whom I would give my father and mother as ransom as no teacher better than him I have seen before or after; for, by God he neither rebuked, nor beat, nor reviled me - he simply said to me, ‘No talk is fitting during the prayer, for it consist only of the glorification of God, declaration of His greatness and recitation of the Qur’an.’”³

Anas has also related many instance of the Prophet’s leniency, sympathy and noble mindedness. He says that God’s Apostle was too generous and kind. If anybody in need approached him for anything, he gave it to him or at least made a promise for the same.

¹ Bukhari, *Kitab ul Maghazi*

² Bukhari, *Kitab ul-Wudu*

³ Muslim

Once, when the Apostle had taken his place to lead the prayer, a desert Arab stepped forward and holding his cloak said, "I stand in need but I fear lest I should forget it." the Prophet went with him and prayed after he had satisfied him.

Speaking of the indulgent and long-suffering nature of the Apostle Anas has cited certain instance of the time when he was a young lad. He says, "I served the Prophet of God for ten years but he never blamed me for doing or not doing anything."¹

Su'ad B. 'Umar called upon the Prophet when, as he says, his own cloak bore some makers of a scent mixed with saffron. The Prophet exclaimed, "Saffron! Saffron! Lay off! Lay off! And hit me with a stick on my stomach, which caused me a little pain. Su'ad said. "O Apostle of God, now I have a right to make requital." The prophet at once bared his belly and said, "Have your revenge."²

MODESTY

The Prophet was absolutely unassuming and modest; he hated to put on airs or to make himself conspicuous on any occasion. He did not even like the people to stand up for showing him respect nor he allowed anybody to extol him in the way the followers of other religions had praised their prophets. He was the Messenger and servant of God and he wanted himself to be known by others in a like manner, neither more, nor less. Anas said that no man was dearer to the companions than God's Messenger, but they never stood up on seeing him for they knew his dislike for that.³

¹ *Muslim, Kitab ul Fada'il*

² *Kitab us-Shifa*. Sua'd demanded to even the score out of love so that he may kiss the Prophet's belly and not to return blow for blow.

³ *Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad*, Vol. III, p. 132

Once the Prophet was addressed as the “Best of Creation.” He promptly replied, “that was the position enjoyed by Ibrahim.”¹

‘Umar reported the Prophet as saying, “Do not exalt me as the Christians have exalted Jesus son of Mary. I am just His servant, so call me God’s servant and Messenger.”²

‘Abdullah B. Abi Aufa reports: “The Apostle of God never disdained to go with the slave or a widow to accomplish their tasks.”³ Anas says that any slave-girl or maidservant of Medina could hold the Prophet by hand and say whatever she liked or take him to the place she desired.⁴

When ‘Adiy B. Hatim came to see the Apostle, he called him inside his house. A maidservant brought a cushion to rest on but the Prophet placed it between him and ‘Adiy and sat down on the floor. ‘Adiy later said that he then immediately realized that the Prophet was not a king.⁵

Anas reported that the Apostle of God used to visit the sick, attend funerals, ride on a donkey and accept a slave’s invitation for a meal.⁶

Jabir states that the Prophet used to slow down his pace for the sake of the weak and also prayed for them.⁷

Anas said: the Prophet accepted an invitation even if he was presented a barley brad soup whose taste had changed.”⁸ he also

¹ *Muslim, Kitab ul Fadail*

² *Bukhari, Kitab ul Anbiya*

³ *Baihaqi*

⁴ *Musnad Ahmad*, Vol. III, pp. 189-215, *Jam'a ul-Fawa'id, Kitab-ul-Manaqib*.

⁵ *Zad al-Ma'ad* Vol. I, p. 43.

⁶ *Shama'il Tirmidhi*.

⁷ *Al-Tarhib wal Tarhib*

⁸ *Shama'il Tirmidhi, Musnad Ahmad*, Vol. III, pp. 211-289.

reports the Prophet as saying, “I am God’s servant, I eat like a servant and sit like a servant.”¹

‘Abdullah B. ‘Amr B. al-‘As says: “once when the Messenger of God came to my house, I gave him a cushion filled with bark, but he sat down on the floor placing the cushion between me and him.”²

The Apostle used to tidy up his house, tether the camels, feed animals, take food with his servants, and help them in kneading flour and bringing provisions from the market.³

COURAGE AND SHYNESS

Courage and shyness are often regarded as conflicting traits but the two poised the Prophet’s character in a like manner. Being extremely modest, he blushed like a maiden, as stated by Abu Sa’eed Khudri, if he came across anything shocking or outrageous. On such occasions his countenance changed showing his displeasure.⁴ such was his coyness that he was even diffident to express anything disagreeable to one’s face and usually asked somebody else to do the job for him. Anas reports that the clothes of a man present in one of his sittings were hued in yellowish colour. Since the Prophet did not like to say anything displeasing to any one, he said to others, when the man had got up leave, “it would have been better if you had told him to give up using yellow color.”⁵

‘Aisha relates that of the Prophet came to know of a misdeed committed by anybody, he never asked him why he had done it; what he said on such occasions was, ‘What was happened to the

¹ *Kitab us Shifa*, p. 101

² *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, p. 172

³ *Kitab us Shifa*, p. 101

⁴ *Bukhari, Kitab ul Manaqib*

⁵ *Shama’il Tirmidhi*, Chap. Khulq an Nabi

people that say or do such a thing?” He deprecated the wrong but never named the wrongdoer.¹

As for the dauntless courage and valour of the Prophet of God, the testimony of ‘Ali, the lion of God, is plenty good enough to illustrate the point. He says: “When the battle used to become fierce and he the eyes seemed to be coming out of the sockets, we were wont to look for the Prophet in order to find a refuge behind him. Then, we found none closing up with the enemy as the Prophet. This was it happened in Badr; we were taking shelter behind the Prophet who was then going at the enemy more closely than anyone of us.”²

Anas said, “The Apostle of God was extremely handsome, most generous and the bravest of men. One night when the people in Madina had been in a panic and some went in the direction of the sound they had heard, they were met by the Prophet who had gone in that direction ahead of them, and he was saying, ‘Don’t fear, don’t fear.’ He was then on a bare-backed horse without a saddle belonging to Abu Talha and had a sword slung on his neck. Praising the horse he said, ‘I found it swift and rushing ahead like an ocean.’”³

In the battles of Uhud and Hunayn when the Muslims had fallen back and the bravest among them were unable to stand the charge of the enemy, the Apostle of God had stuck to his position, ring his mule, as if nothing had happened, and was calling out, “I am the Prophet without falsehood; aim the son of ‘Abdul Muttalib.”

MERCY AND COMPASSION

God’s Messenger was the kindest of men just as he excelled all others in courage and valour. Being extremely kindhearted, his

¹ *Abu Dawud*

² *Kitab us Shifa*

³ *Bukhari, Al Adab al Mufrad*, p. 46

eyes brimmed with tears at the slightest sign of inhumanity. Shaddad B. Aus reports the Apostle as saying, “God has commanded you to show kindness to everyone, so if you have to kill, kill nicely, and if you slaughter an animal, slaughter it gently. If anyone of you has to slay an animal, he should sharpen the blade first and treat the animal well.”¹

Ibn ‘Abbas relates that a man threw a goat on its side and then started sharpening his knife. When the Prophet saw him he said, “Do you want to kill it twice? Why did you not sharpen the knife before throwing it on the ground?”

The Apostle forbade his companions to keep the dumb creatures hungry or thirsty, to disturb or to overburden them. He commanded that kindness and putting them at ease were meritorious acts tending to bring man nearer to God.

Abu Huraira reports the Prophet as saying, “A traveler who was a thirsty saw a well in the way. He got inside the well and when he came out he saw a dog licking mud because of thirst. The man bethought himself that the dog should be as thirsty as he was and so he got into the well again, filled his leather sock with water and carried it out holding with his teeth. And thus he quenched the thirst of the dog. God was pleased with this act of kindness and pardoned his sins. The companions asked, “O Messenger of god, is there recompense in the matter of beasts and wild animals also?” The Prophet replied, “There is recompense in regard to every creature that has living heart.”²

‘Abdullah B. ‘Umar told that the Prophet said, “A woman was cast away into the hell only because she had denied food and water to her cat and refused to set it free so that the cat might satisfy its hunger by taking worms and insects.”³

¹ *Muslim, Kitab uz Zabih*

² *Bukhari and Muslim*

³ Nawawi on the authority of Muslim

Suhayl B. ar-Rab'i B. 'Amr states that the Apostle of God came across a camel so famished that its belly had shrunk to its back. He said, "Fear God in the matter of these dumb creatures. If you ride them, ride when they are healthy and if you eat them, eat them when they are in a good condition."¹

'Abdullah B. J'afar narrated the incident that once the Prophet entered the enclosure of an Ansari where there was a camel which started groaning on catching sight of the Prophet, tears running down its eyes. The Prophet went near it, patted on its hump and face, which set it at ease. Then the Apostle asked who its owner was. The Ansari young men came and said; "O Messenger of God, it's belong to me." The Prophet said to him, "Do you not fear God in the matter of this beast although he has made you its owner? It complained to me that you bore hard upon it and always kept it at work."²

Abu Huraira quoted the Apostle as saying, "when you travel in a fertile country do not deny the camels their due from the ground, and when you travel in a land barren and dry, cover it with speed. When you encamp at night keep away from the roads, for they are where the beast pass and are the resorts of the insects at night."³

Ibn Mas'ud reports, "while we were on a journey with God's Messenger, he went a short distance from where we had encamped. There we saw a small bird with two of its bridling and caught them. The bird was fluttering when the Prophet came back and so he asked us to return the chicks. There we also saw an anthill and burn it out. When the Prophet saw he asked, 'who has burnt it? When we informed him that we had done it, he said, 'only the Lord of fire has the right to punish with fire."⁴

¹ Abu Dawud

² Ibid

³ Muslim

⁴ Abu Dawud, Kitab ul Jihad

The Prophet strongly enjoined the duty of kind and generous treatment to the slaves, servants and the labour engaged for manual work. Jabir relates the Apostle of God as saying, "feed them with the food which you eat, clothe them with such clothing as you wear and do not cause trouble to God's creatures."¹ The Apostle is further stated to have said, "Those whom God has made your dependents are your brothers, servants and helpmates. Anybody whose brother as been made subservient to him ought to feed him with the food he eats and clothe him with clothes he wears, command him not to do that which he is unable to do and if it becomes necessary to do so then he should help him in doing the job."²

'Abdullah B. 'Umar says that once a nomadic Arab came and asked the Prophet, "How many times should I pardon my servant in a day?" the Prophet replied, "Seventy times."³ He also quotes the Apostle as saying; "Pay the wages of a laborer before his sweat dries up."⁴

A COMPREHENSIVE AND ETERNAL MODEL

The messenger of God was the last and the greatest of all the prophets sent to provide guidance to all classes, ranks and grades in every age, time and clime. The comprehensiveness of the Prophet's character summed up graphically by Syed Sulaiman Nadwi in 'Muhammad, The Ideal Prophet', would be a fitting epilogue to this section dealing with the character of the Prophet. Syed Sulaiman Nadwi writes:

"A model which can serve for every class of the people acting under different circumstances and states of human emotions will be found in the life of Muhammad (peace be upon him). If you are rich, there is the example of the tradesman of Mecca and the master of Bahrain's treasure; if you are poor, you can follow the interneers of Sh'eb Abi Talib and the emigree of

¹ Al Adab al Mufrad, p. 38

² Bukhari and Abu Dawud

³ Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud

⁴ Ibn Majah

Medina; if you are a king, watch the actions of the Ruler of Arabia; if you are a vassal, take a look at the man enduring hardships imposed by the Quraish of Mecca; if you are a conqueror, lay your eyes on the victor of Badr and Hunayn; if you have suffered a defeat, take a lesson from the one discomfited at Uhad; if you are a teacher, learn from the holy mentor of the school of Suffah, if you are a student, look at the learner who sat before Gabriel; if you are a sermoner, direct your eyes to the discourser delivering lectures in the mosque of Medina; if you are charged to preach the gospel of truth and mercy to your persecutors, observe the helpless preacher explaining the message of God to the pagans of Mecca; if you have brought your enemy to his knees, look at the conqueror of Mecca; if you want to administer your lands and properties, discover how the lands and groves of Bani an-Nadir, Khaybar and Fadak were managed; if you are an orphan, do not forget the child of Amina and 'Abdullah left to tender mercy of Halima; if you are young, see the character of Mecca's shepherd; if you have a traveling business, cast a glance at the leader of the caravan under way to Busra; if you are judge or arbiter, look at the umpire entering the holy sanctuary before the peep of dawn and installing Hajr Aswad in the Ka'ba, or the justice of peace in whose eyes the poor and rich were alike; if you are a husband, study the behaviour of the husband of Khadijah and 'Aisha; if you are a father, go through the biography of Fatimah's father and grandfather of Hasan and Hussein; in short, whoever and whatever you may be, you would find a shining example in the life of the Prophet to illuminate your behaviour. If you have the life of the Prophet before you, you can find the examples of all the prophets, Noah and Abraham, John and Jonah and Moses and Jesus. If the life and character of each prophet of God were deemed to be a shop selling the wares of one commodity, that of Muhammad (peace be upon him) would verily be a variety store where goods of every description can be had to suit the tastes and needs of all.¹

¹ Muhammad, The Ideal Prophet, pp. 89-90

MERCY FOR THE WORLD

"We sent thee not save as a mercy for the peoples." (Qur'an 21:107)

The world was passing through a state of hysterics at the close of the sixth century of the Christian era. The entire human race had, it seems, taken a pledge to commit suicide. God has portrayed, in the Qur'an, the condition then obtaining in the world so graphically that no artist can draw such a true of life picture of the then situation.

"And remember Allah's favour unto; how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it." (Qur'an 3:103)

If our historians and literatures have not been able to preserve the heart-rending account of human pagan past, they need not be blamed for it because limitations of human language and forms of expression would not have allowed them to capture in words the dreadful situation of then world. The shape of things was so horrible, so critical, that not the best word painter could have succeeded in its faithful depiction. How could any historian have drawn a picture of that horrible situation? Did the Age of Ignorance merely mean moral corruption of the Arabs or a few other nations? Did it merely pose the problem of idolatry, depravity and decadence or else self-indulgence, inequity and exploitation of the poor, or, criminal behaviour of the then stronger nations? Was it simply the question of the burial of innocent newborn daughters by their heartless father? It was all this and much more. It was as though the mother earth wanted to swallow up its entire progeny. There are hardly words to describe the terrifying conditions through which the whole world was passing in those days. Only those can understand it that have themselves lived in that horrible age.

It was thus not a problem confronting any single nation or country but the destiny of the whole human race was at stake. If any artist

capable of converting a vision into eternity were to paint the portrait of a good-looking young man in fine fettle, a soul shining through its crystal covering, and could somehow show him to be the vicegerent of God on earth who was bent on taking a leap in a lake of fire and brimstone, then he would perhaps succeed in portraying the situation thus depicted in the Qur'an: "(How) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, He did save you from it." The holy Prophet has also illustrated this critical situation through a simile. He says, "The mission and guidance I have been vouchsafed to deliver to this world is like this: A man made a bonfire and when it illuminated the surroundings, insects began to jump into it. You also want to take a leap into the fire in a like manner but I am holding you by your waists to save you from falling into the eternal fire."¹

The whole problem was how to lead the caravan of humanity to its safe destination. All the social and developmental endeavors, educational and literary efforts were possible only after man had been brought back to a normal, sensible frame of mind. There is the least doubt that the greatest good the prophets have done to the humanity consists of saving it from the unknown, imminent dangers threatening to destroy it from time to time. No literature or philosophy, reformatory or constructive effort, not even the survival of man on this planet could have been possible without the merciful endeavors of the prophets of God. But, so ungrateful is man that he has announced with the flourish of trumpets, time and again, that the Prophets of God had had their time, and that the world no longer needed them. It seers and guides have repeatedly declared that the prophets had nothing new to offer, no benefits to confer to humanity. Man has, in this way really deposed over and over again against his own right to exist in this world!

When any civilization becomes over-sophisticated it closes its eyes to the ethical precepts. Man forgets everything save the satisfaction

¹ *Mishakat, Bukhari*

of his desires and replaces his loving, merciful heart by a selfish and ferocious disposition. His covetous greed takes the shape of an aching void, which can never be filled in. This is the time when man becomes mad after the world and all that it stands for and, then, the Providence moves to chasten him and to give him his deserts. Poet of the East has given expression to the same truth in one of his verses:

*Fever of lunacy then overtakes the kings,
Ferule of God are all, Timor and Chinghiz.*

One can replace the words 'king' and 'kingship' by civilization for the insanity of civilization is nowadays much more dangerous and wider in scope than the madness of the kings of old. A single lunatic can make a hell of the life of all the people around him, one can very well imagine that would happen if the whole people were to lose their heads.

During the era we speak of as the age of Ignorance the entire human race had become so depraved, so cruel-hearted that it took it pleasure in the suffering of man. This is not poetic imagery but is supposed by hard facts of history; man had turned into a demon who was most enthusiastic to witness the death and suffering of his own species. He prized the spectacle of the pangs of death suffered by human beings more than the pleasure he derived from merry-making, eating and drinking.

Gladiatorial sports involving combats between men and wild beasts under the Romans displayed more vividly than any other crime against humanity, the bottomless chasm to which human nature could sink. But this was not a depravity that had captured the imagination of a few guilty consciences. Writing about the immense popularity of these performances, Lecky says in his *History of European Morals* that "the magnificent circus, the gorgeous dresses of the assembled Court, the contagion of a passionate enthusiasm thrilling almost visibly through the mighty throng, the breathless silence of expectation, the wide cheers bursting

simultaneously from eight thousand tongues, and echoing to the farthest outskirts of the city, the rapid alteration of the fray, the deeds of splendid courage that were manifested were all fitted to entrance the imagination."¹ The interest and enthusiasm that attended these games of inconceivable atrocity was so intense that special laws were found necessary, and, sometimes proved even sufficient, to check them.

Thus, the best in man had taken hold of him during the age of Ignorance. He had, by his deeds, furnished the proof that he had forfeited the right to live in this world, or, rather he had himself lost the very desire to remain in this world anymore. Yet, his Lord and Master, the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful had decided otherwise. He wanted to save the world and the progeny of Adam from death and destruction through a Messenger who was told that:

"And (O Muhammad) we sent thee not save as a mercy for the people."²

It is plain as day that the entire duration of the world's existence since the debut of the holy Prophet of Islam stems from his merciful deeds. First of all he removed the Sword of Damocles hanging over the head of humanity by giving it a new ideal to live for and a new zest and confidence to work for it. A new age of culture and civilization, arts and learning, material and spiritual progress—a new brave world—came into existence through his efforts.

The first and foremost service that he rendered to the humanity consisted of the faith in the Oneness of God. No other creed more revolutionary, more life giving and more profitable could have been vouchsafed to the humanity. Man had been proud and presumptuous, boastful of his creations like philosophy and poetry

¹ W.E.H. Lecky; *History of European Morals*, Vol. I. p119.

² Qur'an 21:107. The world used for 'peoples' in the Qur'an is 'Alamin, that is, the worlds.

and the art of government; he took pride in enslaving other countries and nations; often arrogated himself even to the position of God; but he also demeaned himself by bowing his head before inanimate, lifeless objects, things of his own creature, and mountains, rivers, trees and animals; and harboured credulous beliefs and irrational fear of the demons and devils. He spent his life in the fear of the unknown and the hope from non-existent powers which could not but foster mental confusion, cowardice, doubtfulness and indecision in him. The Prophet of Islam made him self-reliant, courageous, rational and undoubting by removing the fear of everything else save that of his real Master and the Lord. It was because of him that came to recognize his Creator as the Supreme Power, the Enriches and Destroyer. This new discovery meant a world of change for him as it enabled him to free himself from the shackles of superstitious beliefs, irrational fears, dubiousness and misgivings. He could now see the unity of cause in the manifoldness of phenomena, was reassured of his pivotal position in the scheme of creation, became aware of his worth and dignity, in short, his acceptance of the serfdom of the One and only God made him the master of every other created being and object. It was, thus for the first time that man became aware of the exalted position allotted to him by God.

Unity of Godhead came to be recognized, thanks to the last Prophet, as the guiding principle for all the schools of thought, philosophies and creeds. Even polytheistic religions were so powerfully influenced by it that their votaries began to fight shy of their creeds and started putting up construction to explain away their rites and observances demanding devotion to gods and demigods. The heathen belief in the worship of numerous deities began to suffer from a sense of inferiority from which has still not recovered. This was the greatest gift bestowed on humanity by the holy Prophet.

The second great favour conferred by the Messenger of God on human beings was conferred by the Messenger of God on human beings was the concept of equality and brotherhood of mankind.

The world before him was divided by manifold divisions of castes and creeds, tribes and nations, some claiming ranks of nobility for themselves and condemning others to the position of serfs and chattels. It was for the first time that the world heard the revolutionary message of human equality from the Prophet of Islam.

"O Mankind, Your God is one and you have but one father. You are all progeny of Adam, and Adam was made of clay. Lo! the noblest among you, in sight of God, is the best in conduct. No Arab has any preference over the non-Arab nor the non-Arab an Arab save by his piety."

The Prophet made this declaration on the occasion of his last *hajj* before a congregation of one lakh and twenty-four thousand persons. His announcement put the seal on the twin principles of the Unity of God and the Unity of mankind. These are the two natural foundations for raising any edifice of peace and progress, friendship and co-operation between different peoples and nations. They create a twin relationship between human beings—that of One Lord and one father for all of them. Oneness of God is the spiritual principle of human equality just as a common lineage of the high and the low, the white and the colored races places them on the same plane of humanity.

The world was not in a frame of mind to pay heed to the message of equality of human beings when it was first announced by the Prophet of Islam. It was then a radical call, making a clean sweep of the then social relationships and economic and political orders. So striking and revolutionary was this call that it had sent the world into jitters. Today we find the principle of human equality enshrined in the constitutions of different countries and being proclaimed from the forum of the United Nations Organization in the shape of the Charter of Human Rights but it was all due to the pioneering efforts of the followers of Muhammad (peace be upon him), Muslim missionaries and reformers, who made indefatigable

¹ *Kinaz-ul-'Ammal*

efforts to establish a truly egalitarian Muslim society. It was this model established through their toil and tears that later on the came to be accepted as the standard human existence in this world. There was a time when a numerous clans and families claimed their descent from the sun and the moon. Qur'an quotes the belief then held by the Jews and the Christians in these words: "The Jews and the Christians say: We are the children of God and those whom He loves."¹ The Pharaohs of Egypt claimed themselves to be the incarnation of the Sun god while India had several ruling families, which arrogated themselves as the progeny of the sun or the moon. The Emperors of Iran called themselves *Kasra* or Chosroes, which meant that Divine blood flowed in their veins. The last Iranian Emperor was known as Yazdagird owing, chiefly, to the Divine respects paid to him by his subjects.

The Chinese rulers deemed themselves to the sons of Heaven. They believed that the Heaven was their God, who, with his spouse, the goddess earth, had given birth to the human beings and *Pau Ku*, the Chinese Emperor, was the first-born son of Heaven enjoying supernatural powers. The Arabs were so proud of their language that every other nation besides their own was an '*ajami*' or dumb to them. Likewise, the Quraish of Mecca being extremely conscious of maintaining their superiority claimed a position of privilege even in the performance of *hajj*. This was the shape of things, all over the world, when the Qur'an proclaimed that all human beings were equal.

"O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is knower, Aware."
(Qur'an 49:13)

In another Surah, which is the opening chapter of the Qur'an, it was declared that:

"Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds" (Qur'an 1:1)

¹ Qur'an 5:18

The third great gift and a boon to the humanity bestowed by the Prophet of Islam is the Islamic concept of humanity dignity. During the age of Darkness when Islam made its appearance none was so ignoble and humiliated as man. Without any worth, he had absolutely no sense of human dignity. Oftentimes trees and animals regarded as sacred, owing to religious beliefs or traditions, enjoyed a more coveted place than man himself. Human sacrifices at the altar of deities were common spectacle. It was solely due to Muhammad, the Prophet (peace be upon him), that man came to appreciate the fact that human beings, the glorious creation of God, were entitled to a much more loving regard, respect and honour than any other creature. The rank accorded to man by the holy Prophet was next only to God; for God had Himself heralded the purpose of man's creation in these words of lasting beauty:

“He it is who created for you all that is in the earth.” (Qur'an 2:29)
Man was declared as the best of creations, the ruler of the world and all that exist in it.

“Verily We have honoured the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment”.
(Qur'an 17:70)

Man had been accustomed to associate nobility with those who claimed themselves to be the progeny of gods and demy-gods. In order that the honour of the common mans was not usurped again by the selected few, the Prophet announced:

“The whole mankind is the family of God and he amongst His family is dearest to Him, who does good to others”¹

A celestial Tradition of the Prophet alludes to the deep concern of God for the welfare of human beings. It say as: “God would ask (someone) on the Day of Judgment, ‘I was ill but you did not pay a

¹ Mishkat

visit to Me! The man would reply; 'How could have I paid a visit Thee? Thou art the Lord of the worlds!' But god would say, 'Do you not recollect that one of my slaves was ill? Had you gone to see him, you would have found Me by his side! Then God would ask, 'O son of Adam, I asked you to feed Me, but you refused it to Me.' The man would submit, 'How could have fed Thee, Thou art the Lord of the Worlds?' But the reply of God would be, 'Do you not remember that one of My slaves has asked you for food? Didn't you know that if you had given food, you would have found it with Me! God would again ask, 'O Son of Adam, I asked you water to drink but you refused it to Me!' The man would say in reply, 'O Lord, How could have I given water to Thee? Thou art the Lord of the worlds' but the reply given by God would be, 'Do you not recollect that one of my slaves asked you for water, but you refused! Did you not know that if you had given him water, you would have found it with Me?'¹

Islam preaches unalloyed and absolute unity of God and rejects every form of anthropomorphism. Still, it employees this similitude to drive home the rank and dignity of man in the eyes of God. Has any other religion or philosophical thought accorded a nobler place to human beings than that assigned by Islam?

The prophet of Islam thought that the surest way to attract blessings of God was to be kind and considerate to others.

"The Most Compassionate (God) is kind on those who are kind to others. If you would show kindness to those who live on the earth, He who lives in the Heaven, shall shower His blessings on you."²

You can very well imagine the pitiable condition of man in the days when this powerful voice of human dignity had not been raised in the world. A mere whim of a king or an emperor could then cost the lives of a thousand men. It was then not unusual for an ambitious adventurer to put to sword the entire population of

¹ Sahih Muslim

² Abu Dawud

conquered land; Alexander converted all the countries from Greece to India into a vast battlefield. Caesars played with the lives of human beings as if they were wild beasts. The two World Wars fought only recently had cost the lives of millions merely for securing markets for the industrial produce of advanced nations or to establish national or political ascendancy of certain nations over all others. Iqbal has correctly assessed the political ambitions of man in this verse,

Man is still possessed by the imperialistic lust, what a pity! Man prowling after man as yet.

At the time when Muhammad (peace be upon him) was invested with the mantle of prophet hood, a general sense of pessimism springing from the then prevalent notions of worthlessness of human nature and hopelessness of Divine succour filled the air. The ancient religions of the east and the mutilated Christianity, especially in the West, had an equal share in producing that mental climate. The Philosophy of re-birth, preached by the religions of ancient India, which assigned no place to the will and decisions of man, meant that the present life was but a form of retribution for one's actions during his previous life with which the Christian dogma of Original Sin and atonement had joined hands to shake the confidence of millions, all over the world, in the responsiveness and amenability of human actions. Mankind had lost faith in the mercy of God whose eternal and immutable decree seemed to have condemned man to a pre-determined destiny without reference to his evil or virtuous behavior. But Muhammad (peace be upon him) affirmed that man was born with a clean slate and perfect freedom of action. Man was, declared the Prophet, the author of his actions, both good and evil, and deserved reward or punishment in accordance with his own decisions to shape the course of his actions, discarding the theory of vicarious atonement, the Qur'an established once for all that every man was his own redeemer.

“And that for man shall be naught, save that wherefore he maketh effort, and that his endeavor shall be presently observed” (Qur’an 53:39-40)

This was a message of salvation to man, which gave him a new confidence in himself and in his ability to chart out his destiny. He applied himself with a renewed vigour, confidence and determination to shape up his own life and brighten the future of humanity.

The Prophet of Islam also declared that sins were but temporary deviations from the right path, inherent in the nature of man, and were brought about by ignorance, mistake and the promptings of the devil or man’s own sensual desires. But the innate urge of man was to regret his mistake and seek pardon of God with a contrite heart. To be broken in spirit by a sense of the guilt and to seek the forgiveness of God showed the goodness of human nature and attracted mercy of the Lord. This gospel of hope and good tidings was revolutionary message to the despondent humanity condemned forever by the guilt or Original Sin and one’s past misdoings. What a great change it meant in the prevailing atmosphere of gloom and depression of spirits is illustrated by the fact that the Prophet came to be known as ‘Apostle of Repentance.’ Repentance, he said, did not involve faint-heartedness, nor did it arise from fear of disapprobation, but was a bold and daring step of the first man, Adam, who had thus shown the nobility of his innate nature. The Prophet of Islam endued repentance with the sacredness attached to the acts of devotion of God. He preached the virtues of seeking pardon so forcefully that even the irredeemable sinners, who had lost all hope of forgiveness, resolved to turn away from the sinful ways and to begin a new life of virtue and uprightness, and many of them attained a sublimity of spirit that was envied by others.

Describing the clemency of God is ever willing to forgive the sinners, the Qur’an employs a diction so alluringly charming that one wonders whether God loves them more who seeks forgiveness after deviating from the path of virtue. The Quranic

verse quoted here shows how forbearing, how long-suffering and how magnanimous God is to the man who cares to turn towards Him for exoneration of his sins. Says the Qur'an:

*"Say thou: O my bondmen who have committed extravagance against themselves, despair not of the mercy of Allah; verily Allah will forgive their sins altogether.
Verily He! He is the forgiving, the Merciful." (Qur'an 39:53)*

Some of the verses of the Qur'an exhorting the believers to acquire positive merits and to win their way to the everlasting bliss, address them in these words:

"And vie one with another for forgiveness from your Lord, and toward the Garden as wide as are the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who ward off (Evil): "And those who spend (of that which Allah hath given them) in ease and in adversity, those who control their wrath and are forgiving toward mankind; Allah loveth the good; "and those who, when they do an evil thing or wrong themselves, remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins – Who forgiveth sine save Allah only? – And will knowingly repeat (the wrong) they did.

"The reward of such will be forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide for ever – a bountiful reward for workers! (Qur'an 3:133-36)

Among the characteristic of the true believers, enumerated in another verse, repentance take precedence of all others.

"They are those who repent, who worship, who praise, who fast constantly, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who command the reputable and restrain from the disreputable and who keep the ordinances of Allah: and bear thou glad tidings to the believers." (Qur'an 9:112)

The place of honour accorded to those who repent of their sins is illustrated by the verse of the Qur'an revealed of the occasion of

the forgiveness of the three companions¹ of the Holy Prophet, who had been excluded from other followers for their failure to accompany the Prophet in the expedition of Tabuk. Before the verse alludes to the mistake of these companions being condoned by God, it mentions the Prophet and the Ansar and the Muhajirin in order that no stigma was attached to them after their mistake had been pardoned. The Qur'an, in this way, teaches all believers, who take the companions of the Prophet as models of virtue, that no ignominy attaches to man after a genuine change of heart. They way these verse explain the consequences of the blotting out of the sins and elation of the repentant sinners can hardly be found in the scriptures of other religions or treatises on ethics. These verses read:

“Allah hath turned in mercy to the Prophet, and to the Muhajirin and the Ansar who followed him in the hour of hardship. After the hearts of a party of them had almost swerved aside, then turned He unto them in Mercy. Lo! He is full of Pity, Merciful for them.

“And to the three also (did He turn mercy) who were left behind, when the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for them, and their own souls were straitened for them till they bethought them that there is no refuge from Allah save toward Him. Then turned He unto them in mercy that they (too) might turn (repentant unto Him). Lo! Allah! HE is the Relenting, the Merciful.”
(Qur'an 9:117-18)

Remission of sins leads us to one of the chief attributes of the Divine Being, that is, His mercy and compassion. The bounty of God's mercy is the constant theme of the Qur'an. Said God: “My mercy embraceth all things;”² while a celestial Tradition of the Prophet tell us: verily, My mercy overcomes My anger.” To be despaired of the God's mercy was made a cardinal sin. Quoting

¹ The companions were Ka'b b. Malik, Hilal b. Umayya and Murara b. Rab'i. See the Chap. “The Expedition of Tabuk.”

² Qur'an 7:156

Y'aqub¹ and Ibrahim, the two great Prophets of God, the Qur'an announces:

"Verily, none despaireth of the comfort of Allah except a people disbelieving" (Qur'an 12:87) and "who despaireth of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray? (Qur'an 15:56)

The misery and suffering the human race endured in the world was, according to the Jewish and Christian doctrines, but a feeble image of the never-ending agony which awaited man in the future world. The monastic orders of the Medieval Ages had taken up this doctrine, which, in itself, was sufficiently revolting, but they had developed it with an appalling vividness and minuteness. The humanity scared by these ghastly visions and glimpse on God's all-embracing mercy and the efficacy of repentance which could wipe the slate clean of even the most vicious among the castaways of society.

And now we come to yet another gift of the prophet hood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), which is still more far-reaching, more beneficial to the humanity at large. This was the concept of the unity of spirit and matter, the harmony of the sacred and the mundane. He taught that the distinction made between the two was superficial and formal for every action of man, whether secular or religious, was guided by his motive or mental attitude, which, in the terminology of religion, was known as Niyat or intention. For no religious belief is entirely divorced from the realities of human experience in its manifold practical aspects, the intention or purpose with which any act is done sets the test of its being good or bad. He did not recognize the division between the temporal and the ecclesiastical since man's desire to propitiate God and to follow His commands permeates into every fiber of human activity, no matter whether it is the art of government or war, availing oneself of one's earthly possessions, or satisfaction of one's natural desires, or earning one's living, or leading a married

¹ Jacob

life. With a noble intention every mundane act it's turned into a virtuous deed and means to attaining propinquity to God. On the contrary, no merit whatsoever attaches to acts like devotion to God or fighting in the path of God if the sincere desire to attain the will and pleasure of God were absent.

The ancient world had divided life into compartments, religious and the secular; and the results was that a wedge had been driven between those who selected one of these as the pursuit of their lives. Oftentimes, the two groups were at loggerheads with one another, for, the 'world' and 'religion' was to them incompatible spheres of human life. Every man had to choose one of the two since nobody could be expected to travel in two boats simultaneously. The prevalent view was that the path of salvation lay not through the rough and tumble of life, but away from the social, economic and political problems of worldly pursuits. No concept of religion which bars the gates to material progress and acquisition of power, riches and fame, could be of interest to intelligent, capable and ambitious persons: the result being that a great segment of humanity had delivered itself from the rigorous discipline of asceticism which had come to be associated with religion. By withdrawing themselves from the then virtuous pursuits, these men had prevented the great importance of morals from appearing perceptibly in public affairs. The state has revolted against the Church and made itself free from all moral obligations. This hideous schizophrenia not only divested what was called worldly from the gifts of spiritual beatitude, but also gave birth to the modern faithlessness and agnosticism of Europe which is now threatening to inundate the entire world, if only, because of its political and cultural supremacy. The present wave of crass materialism, loss of faith and moral debasement is but a direct consequence of the division between the spirit and matter invented by the old pagan civilizations.

The Prophet of mercy, who was sent to the humanity as Warner as well as a messenger of glad tidings, converted the entire life of man into devotion to God by denying the existence of any cleavage

between the spirit and temporal spheres of human affairs. He demolished the wedge between the men of religion and those of the world and commended all of them to unite their efforts for attaining the pleasure of God and service of humanity. It was because of him that the world could see the ascetic who wore crowns on their heads and the warriors who spent their nights in devotions and prayers.

It would be difficult to conceive a more complete transformation of life than the one brought about by the fusion of the secular and the sacred, which would require several volumes to be explained in detail. Iqbal has very succinctly verified the significance of this concept in one of his immortal poems.

On monastic order was laid the foundation of church,
How could mendacity contain the royalty in its confines?
The conflict was deep, between hermitry and kingship, one was
triumphant,
The other subdued, and politics got rid of religion,
Helpless was the high priest.
When the world and religion parted ways,
Avarice was the Ruler, King and Vizier.
Dualism was the doom of mind and matter,
Dualism made the civilization blind.
This is the miracle of a dweller of the desert,
Whose warnings reflected the tidings-glad;
That the humanity's only refuge was this,
That (the mystic) Junyd unites with Ardsheer (the king)!

Yet another radical change brought about by the Prophet of Islam in the life of man was to make him conscious of the ultimate end of his life. Unaware of his goal and objective, man had his eyes fixed on profane and paltry objects. He directed his whole intelligence and labour to the acquisition of wealth or land or fame or power. Goodness having been associated with pleasurable things, the main object of the vast majority of people was to sublimate their conceptions of happiness and interest with the

satisfaction of carnal desires, songs and colour, merrymaking, fun and amusement. Revelry of the rich and the powerful soon brought up a class of parasite whose whole business was to tickle the fancy of their patrons. But Muhammad (peace be upon him) told man that the great business of man was to exert himself and to strive to attain the perfect knowledge of God; to contemplate of His nature and attributes and to lead his wandering soul to divine propinquity through realization of the Unlimited; to search out the Unity of the Cause of all Causes in the amazing diverse phenomena of Nature; and to seek His pleasure through being kind just and virtuous. He told that these were the objectives whose achievement conferred a rank on him envied by the angels of God.

Thus, the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) made a clean sweep of the existing order of things in the world. The longings and desire of man were now centered on a new objective; the love of God took possession of his being; the pleasure of God became the immortal thirst of human heart; mercy and kindness to God's creatures was recognized as the greatest virtue which became the sole object of man's endeavor.

It was then, after the advent of Islam, that the leading feature of all the countries, Arabia and Iran, Syria and Egypt, Turkistan and Iraq, North Africa and Spain became the search for higher and tender virtues, in the pursuit of which we find thousands of love-lorn souls. During this period we see innumerable men of God preaching love of God, kindness and compassions to very sentient being, merits of virtuous living, acquisition of knowledge for attaining the pleasure of God, revulsion to cruelty and indecency and the grace of humanity and modesty. They taught the lesson of human dignity and brotherhood of man and made the earth a kingdom of God.

If you peep into the souls of these elevated souls you would witness unbelievable flight of their imagination, purity of their innermost feelings and nimbleness of their perceptions. You

would see how they were ever willing to put their own life at stake of others, how they made their own children and family suffer for the good of all and sundry, the way they compelled the autocratic kings and potentates to do justice to the weak and the poor and how rightfully just they were even to their enemies. Of a fact, it would have been difficult for us to believe today what a fine specimen of humanity, what a sublime soul were these men of God if the historians and biographers had not preserved a truthful record of their lives and doings.

This striking change in the manners and morals of the people was, indeed, the greatest miracle worked by the holy Prophet of Islam.

Verily, God saith in truth: *"We have sent thee not save as mercy for the peoples."*

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

The Nabatean Kingdom	315 B.C. – A.D. 106
Bursting of the Marib Dam	A.D. 120
Introduction of Judaism to the Yemen	200-236
The Golden Age of Palmyra	150-272
Lakhmid Dynasty of Hyra, Satellite Kingdom of Persia	286-605
Bani Ghassan, Pylarchs of East Syria	
Under the Romans	400
Qusayy seizes control of Mecca	570
Abraha's attack on Mecca	570
Birth of the Prophet	20 th , August, 570
Death of Prophet's mother	576
Death of 'Abdul Muttalib	578
The Prophet's first trip of Syria	582
The Sacrilegious war	580-590
The Prophet's second trip to Syria	595
Marriage of the Prophet to Khadijah	595
Commencement of Revelation	6 th August, 610
Abu Bakr and Khadijah accept Islam	610
Beginning of the Prophet's preaching	613
War between the Byzantine and Persian Empires	602-628
Hamza accept Islam	615
Umar accepts Islam	615
The first emigrants to Abyssinia	615
The Boycott of Bani Hashim	616-619
Death of Abu Talib and Khadijah	619
First Pledge of 'Aqa	621
The Prophet's Ascension	622
Second Pledge of 'Aqaba	622
The Hijrah – (Migration to Medina) (1)	Sept. 24, 622
The first expedition under Hamza	Jan. 623
Raid of Nakhla under 'Abdallah b. Jahash	Nov. 623
Direction of prayer changed for Jerusalem	

To Mecca	Oct. 623
Institution of the fast Ramadhan	Jan. 624
Battle of Badr	15 th March, 624
Exile of Bani Qaynuqa	April, 624
Abu Sufyan's raid of as-Sawaiqq	April, 624
Murder of K'ab b. Ashraf	July, 624
Battle of Uhud	March 23, 625
Massacre of ar-Raji	May, 625
Massacre of Bir Ma'una	June, 625
Exile of Bani an-Nadir	August/September, 625
Muslim Army goes to Bard	March, 626
Raid of Dha-ar-Riqā	June, 626
Expedition to al-Muraysi	January, 627
Battle of Trenches	March, 627
Attack on Bani Qurayza	April, 627
Raid on Bani al-Mustaliq	December/January, 627-628
Truce of Hudaibia	March, 628
Conquest of Khaybar	September, 628
First Pilgrimage ('Umra) to Mecca	February, 629
The Conquest of Mecca	January, 630
Battle of Hunayn	February, 630
Siege of Ta'if	February/march, 630
Expedition to Tabuk	July/August, 630
The first Pilgrimage under Islam	January/February, 631
The year of Deputations	631
The farewell pilgrimage	March, 632
Death of the Prophet	8 th June, 632

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Abu Dawud, Sulaiman b. Al-Ash’ath al-Sijistani, Sunan Abu Dawud
Abu Nu’aym Asbahani, Hilyatul Awliya’
Abu Tamman habib b. Aus al-Tayr, (ed) Diwan-al-Hamasa
Abu Zuhra, Muhammad, Khatimun Nabiyyun
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1) Shar-us-Sunnah
2) Mishkatul-Masabih
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1) Al-Jam’i al-Sahih
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 Ibn Abde Rabbih, Shahabuddin Ahmad, Al-'Iqd al-Farid
 Ibn 'Abdul barr al-Maliki al-Andlust, Al-Isti'ab fi Marafata al-Ashab
 Ibn al-Athir, Fakhruddin, Al-Kamil
 Ibn al-Athir, Izzudin Abi al-Hassan Ali b. Muhammad al-Jazari, Usd al-Ghabah
 In al-Kalbi, Kitab-ul-Asnam
 Ibn Faurak al-Ansari, Muhammad b. al-Hasan, Kitab al-Fusul
 Ibn Hajar, Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Muhammad:
 1) Fath al-Bari
 2) Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari
 3) Al-Isabah fi Tamiz is-Sahabah
 Ibn hanbal, Abu 'Abdallah Ahmad b. Muhammad Shaibani, Musnad Ahmad
 Ibn Hisham, Abi al-Qasim 'Abdur Rahman b. 'Abdallah, As-Sirata Muhammadiyah
 Ibn Kathir, 'Imaduddin:
 1) Tafsir Qur'an al-'Azim (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)
 2) As-Sirat an Nabawiyah,
 3) Al-Bidayah wan Nihaya
 Ibn Khaldun, 'Abdurahman b. Muhammad, Tarikh ibn Khaldun
 Ibn Majah, Abi 'Abdullah Muhammad b. Yazid, Sunan Ibn Majah
 Ibn Manzur, Abi al-Fadl Jamaluddin Muhammad, Lisan al-'Arab
 Ibn Qutaibah, 'Abdallah b. Muslim
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Tab'a Mainawi

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Sarsawati Dayanand, Satyarath Prakash

Shahlin Mikarios, Tarikh Iran

Topa, Ishwar, Hindustani Tamaddun

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